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Opera returns in April



Opera experienced a "golden age" in China in the 17 years following the founding of the People's Republic. However, today it has fallen by the wayside as a form too highbrow for generations raised on pop stars.

But the National Center for Performing Arts still sees hope. Last month, the center announced it would hold its first opera festival with 13 pieces from home and abroad between April and July. But the key to its revival may be a international Chinese opera star.

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City supports outsourcing to ease grads' job hunt

By Han Manman

The local government said recently that the city will start to stimulate the outsourcing industry in Beijing, which it expects will be an important channel to solve this year's job crunch.

Vice Mayor Ji Lin said last Friday this new service outsourcing industry is well-suited to many graduates, especially given the tight market and economic slowdown.

Service outsourcing allows companies to transfer service operations to professional providers so they can focus on their core business. A service outsourcing company helps clients manage business operations, such as IT, training,

logistics and advertising.

"Many foreign companies outsource their business to overseas companies to reduce operations costs, which provide Chinese enterprises with new opportunities," Ma Xiuhong, vice minister of Ministry of Commerce, said. She said international service outsourcing volume will top US \$600 billion next year.

Wei Wei is a map editor for a local technical company. One of the company's businesses is making Japanese maps for their client – a Japanese mapping company.

A hundred Japanese maps, including those of Japanese streets, business areas and communities, are drawn by her com-

pany, she said.

Their client company rents dozens of cars with navigation systems. Each car has 5 video cameras – used to record every corner of the target location – mounted on its roof. "After recording, they send the data to us. We make a map using their data," Wei said.

To ensure the accuracy of the maps, the Japanese company updates its data every three months, Wei said.

Beijing's stimulus plan comes after the country's announcement last month that it will offer tax breaks and subsidies to encourage the growth of service outsourcing nationwide.

Twenty cities, including Beijing,

Shanghai and Hangzhou, have been designated for pilot service outsourcing programs.

The ministry said the government will offer service outsourcing companies a subsidy of up to 4,500 yuan in training fees each year for every college graduate employed on a contract of at least one year.

It said the country hopes to train 1.2 million service outsourcing professionals by 2013. A million college graduates are expected to find new jobs in this sector.

International consultant firm McKinsey & Company said in a report that China's outsourcing business lags behind its neighbor, India.

Its statistics show India's ser-

vice outsourcing volume was US \$42 billion in 2008, nine times China's. More than 2 million Indian people worked in the outsourcing sector, four times as many as worked in China's.

The McKinsey & Company report also forecasted that despite various difficulties, the country still has great potential to develop its outsourcing businesses. The country is expected to become the most important service outsourcing destination in the future.

As of last year, 3,300 Chinese companies provided service outsourcing business to overseas companies. Their contract volume is valued at US \$4.69 billion, according to official statistics.

CPPCC hostesses strike a pose



A photographer takes pictures of hostesses at Tiananmen Square during the closing ceremony of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). China's annual parliamentary sessions, the National People's Congress (NPC) and its advisory auxiliary, the CPPCC came to a close with the economy and unemployment at the top of the agenda.

IC Photo

City's garbage keeps growing

By Jin Zhu

Beijing is set to face a "garbage crisis," Chen Yong, director of the Beijing Municipal Administration Commission, said Sunday.

At present, the city generates 18,400 tons of garbage per day, while it can dispose of only 10,400 tons. The city's waste is growing by 8 percent annually, according to the statistics from the commission.

"Beijing had a 'crisis' in the 1980s and the city was surrounded by garbage at that time. Judging from the current situation, we will see a repeat of this in the near future," Chen said.

"Because of the overload of dumping, pollution is getting out of control. Many residents living near landfills complain," he said.

People are still unaware of the importance of garbage classification.

"The main garbage in Beijing includes waste from construction and electrical industries, restaurants and kitchens. Among them, electrical waste is the most dangerous, since it may pollute the soil and groundwater," Wang Weiping, a senior engineer from the commission, said.

"Most garbage pickers have not realized the importance of trash classification, especially for electrical goods. After stripping them of valuable parts, the leftover material is burned. It causes pollution and harms the health of workers and residents," Diao Zhiling, a store owner and electrical goods seller in Zhongguancun, Haidian District, said.

Authorities plan to build five garbage incineration plants, five large plants for disposing of restaurant and kitchen garbage, eight integrated garbage treatment plants and 40 household garbage transfer stations by 2012, and promote garbage classification, Wang said.

Residents and manufacturers should work together to minimize garbage output by supporting methods of sustainable consumption, he said.

Gov't helps exporters find buyers at home

By Zhao Hongyi

The Municipal Bureau of Commerce invited 30 export-oriented enterprises to join an "exports bazaar" in the New Yansha Mall over the past two weeks. The bureau is continuing with a second round, and promises a third and fourth within this month.

The event aims to help exporters explore the domestic market to counteract the difficulties in the stagnating world market due to financial turmoil.

The first round ended Tuesday, during which 300,000 consumers visited. The 30 exporters sold their products, mostly daily

necessities and small appliances. Total sales reached 1.51 million yuan. The promotion also generated 159 purchasing contracts and cooperation agreements from commercial distributors and retailers.

On February 19, the bureau invited 60 export producers, supermarkets and malls – including Gome, Carrefour and New Yansha – to set up specific sales counters for the exporters to hold a "bazaar."

Beijing Rikon Electric Appliances was one of the first participants. Rikon sold an average of 2,900 yogurt makers each day

at the New Yansha Mall and received orders for another 1,500 units. BestPower, a Beijing-based water filter producer, signed its biggest order ever with Carrefour China: Their agreement reached 3 million yuan.

"High quality and low cost are the two important factors behind the enthusiasm," an enterprise representative told local media.

The bazaar also attracted producers, distributors and retailers from other provinces like Hebei, Liaoning, Heilongjiang and Shandong. Forty-two export-oriented enterprises from Shandong joined the "export bazaar."

Zhang Xianjun, mayor of Heihe, Heilongjiang Province, said at the event they will start their own bazaar in Heihe.

"It's an important and successful push to explore domestic demand," Lai Yang, secretary-general of the Commerce Economy of Beijing, said. "Especially when we are facing a shrinking world market."

The central government is implementing another program to invite electric and electronic producers to sell their products on the vast rural market and subsidize farmers for each item they purchase.

Non-government rescue teams less than harmonious

By Annie Wei

Two leading non-government rescue teams Lantian and Luye set up road signs from Fragrant Hills to Badachu, a popular outdoor hiking route. Both teams aim this year to place their signs in as many places as possible. The question is whether their road signs will actually help amateur hikers.

Lantian's signs are yellow and tell the GPS point of the sign, the direction it is facing and an emergency number. A five-minute walk away from a Lantian sign is Luye's, which has black letters on yellow background with the nearest GPS point, but different rescue and emergency contacts.

Both teams used to belong to the same outdoor Luye Info Web site. With outdoor sports getting

more and more popular, the Luye rescue team was established to provide non-profit help.

However, the team fragmented last year. Some members kept the name Luye to get commercial support from the Web site; others, who said commercial factors influenced Luye too much, formed a new team.

A member from Lantian, who refused to give his name, said that although members of the two teams are still close friends, they no longer cooperate on rescues.

For a while, both teams were competing to respond to outdoor emergency accidents. But lack of funding and manpower caused members to realize such competition was silly and inefficient.

"We should sit down together

to discuss how to distribute our work; to decide which team is responsible for which outdoor areas and to work with warning signs placed by local authorities," a team member named "Yuan-shan" said.

However, he was not optimistic about the meeting because previous cooperation attempts met with a bad ending.

Both teams are looking for ways to develop their organizations. Luye is being funded by big brands and calling on volunteers. Lantian is talking with the local Red Cross, and hopes the organizations can be run similar to rescue teams in Hong Kong, where government pays for maintenance and management and volunteers handle the work.



The Lantian rescue team posts a sign at Fragrant Hills.

Photo by Tom Hao

Retirees accept new environment-friendly pets



An earthworm raiser explains to the residents how to care for their new pets. Photo by Wang Jiahui

By Zheng Lu

The Chunshu Community in Xuanwu District took on some strange pets Tuesday when the earthworms they ordered finally arrived. The worms were not for eating, but to take on a job beyond the ability of the community's normal pets.

The earthworms will help clean up food waste, like vegetables left over from cooking. Twenty families in the community applied to raise the earthworms and experiment to see how well the worms can break down their waste.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs said that under ideal conditions a kilogram of earthworms can keep up with one kitchen's waste and produce a half kilogram of excrement. This waste can be used to feed house plants. An organic food base in Mentougou

District reached an agreement with the community to trade organic vegetables for the earthworm excrement.

The volunteers who purchased the half kilograms of earthworms were mostly retirees. "Young residents are less interested in the project because they have to devote their time to work instead of the caring for and feeding worms," said Li Mei, minister of the Department of Information at the Chunshu sub-district office. Leaving kitchen waste to the worms is more trouble than simply throwing it in the wastebasket.

"It is just like looking after a pet," Li said. Presently the worms are just a test program. However, if successful, more people will be encouraged to participate, she said.

During the interview, reporters from *Beijing Today* met a resident from a community near the Asian Games Village who made a trip to Chunshu to inquire whether or not she could buy earthworms. "I heard about the project and thought it was a good way to protect the environment. I'd like to participate and introduce the activity to our community," she said.

Li Junling, the coordinator of Global Village of Beijing, the NGO which helped to launch the project, said the problem is that garbage sorting remains uncommon in China. "The idea is that raising earthworms can help offset the costs of not sorting garbage," she said. To expand the program to other parts of the city would require corporate sponsorship, she said.

Local student sweeps anti-fur art prizes

By Zhang Dongya

Chinese student Feng Chen, winner of Design Against Fur's China regional contest, was awarded the Grand Prize and People's Choice Award at the international art competition. It was the first time one contestant claimed every prize in the competition.

An exhibition titled "Fashion Victims" at the Coral & Feather Gallery in 798 Art District showed works from the competition last week. It displayed winners' posters from all the five competitive regions including North America, Russia, Europe and China. Feng was awarded the prizes at the exhibition opening ceremony last Sunday.

Feng, a 22-year-old student from Renmin University, participated in the poster design contest last year. His winning poster titled "Mom, Wake Up" depicts a fox with his son. The two are visiting a shop window where the fox's mother is on display – now in coat form.

"Most of the works in the previous contests were a little bloody and cruel. I prefer a softer way of sending the message, because anti-fur education needs to start from a young age. The best way to communicate with children is through fairytales, so I told a story in my work," Feng said.

The judges were from 14 countries and included Xiao Yong, chief designer of the Beijing Olympic Medal and Mary Gehlhar, a fashion director with Gen Art based in New York.

There were 15 candidates, the top three from each of the contest's five regions. "It is fantastic that Feng Chen

has been awarded this distinction despite stiff competition from art students around the world," Chen Qian, director of DAF China, said.

Feng said he participated in the contest because he believed real beauty should not be based on an animal's pain. "It should be simple, but not extravagant or cruel," he said.

Feng has been invited on an eight-day trip to Europe and given an award of US \$1,500 (10,258 yuan).

The anti-fur art contest, first held in 2003, came to China in 2006. This was the second year a China regional contest was held. The task was to create a visually stunning message to question the use of fur-bearing animals for fashion.

"The competition is open only to university students, because they are the next generation of fur buyers. They know how best to communicate with the fashion consumers of tomorrow," Chen said.



Winning poster of DAF 2008
Photo provided by DAF

80s generation's marriages in trouble

When the fear to commit hits the economy

By Venus Lee

When most experts look at the financial crisis in the US, they point to its roots in bad economics, bad politics and failed culture. But some suggest the disaster started with a failure of the family.

In China, the 80s generation was deeply influenced by US pop culture and those children, now adults, are divorcing faster than ever. Unlike people born in the 1960s and 1970s, those from the 1980s are terrified of marriage. Sociologists warn that if the situation continues it will destroy the family and send social progress reeling backwards.



CFP Photo

Fragmented families

The "American dream" so glorified by Hollywood is worshipped by youth around the world who now have a distorted idea of family life. "Some American scholars warn it is time to change the American lifestyle and its values. I agree, and can totally understand the warning," Chen Yiyuan, a researcher from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said.

She said those who chase the American dream embrace egoism and selfishness, and pursue absolute freedom and liberty. They shirk their responsibilities to friends, neighbors, family, children and their spouse, and instead lose themselves in sex, affairs, rushed marriages and divorce.

It causes psychological trouble and a high rate of juvenile crime and self-destructive behavior, all of which hurt the economy.

"Some brilliant American scholars submitted a report to the government by claiming the way out of the financial crisis lies in supporting family customs, enhancing family relations and rebuilding ethics. They have asked that high school students take pre-marital education to emphasize the sanctity of the union," she said.

China has followed the US in its technical and economic achievements, but these could be undone if it next follows US social trends in marriage and family life.

Marriages guaranteed to split

More than 300 couples of the 7,000 who registered their marriage last August 8 in Shanghai have filed for divorce, according to China's Divorce Counseling and Research Center (DCRC).

Five months after they tied the knot during the opening of the Beijing Olympic Games, Zhang Qing and Li Jiemin, both 26-year-old office workers, decided their marriage was over. "I hoped the 'eights' (on our certificate) would bring me good luck, but our marriage was a mess," Zhang said.

Zhang said her husband had a penchant for pissing away money. "He couldn't budget for

our household. He just spent everything on smoking, entertaining his friends and playing around. He used up his salary within two weeks and turned to his parents for more," she said.

Zhao Min, 23, also tied the knot with her 28-year-old hubby. Like many, she was quick to accept his proposal and join the legions looking for a triple-8 marriage certificate. However, she regretted her decision when her new in-laws began asking for a grandchild.

"I am not ready to have a baby. I still feel like a kid inside, and I can't imagine what life will be like with a child of my own.

I don't want to raise a baby so young, but rather to devote more energy to my work," she said.

According to the Blue Book of Chinese Society in 2008, the net decline in marriages is 3.5 million.

However, the divorce rate is skyrocketing: There were 389,000 cases in 1981, 800,000 in 1990, 1,210,000 in 2000 and 2,098,000 in 2007. The Blue Book report said the rate is even higher in Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing.

"The 80s generation is the driving force behind this divorce boom, and it will increase again," Ming Li, the director of DCRC, said.

Generation engendered with fear

Many 80s children fear marriage. An online marriage survey sponsored by the China Youth Daily showed only 22 percent of the 5,000 surveyed admitted their fear, while 46 percent said they knew people who were afraid of marriage. Half the respondents identified 80s children as those most afraid.

Dong Bing, a 25-year-old IT worker, planning to marry this May, is still worried about the cost. "I have only been working for three years. I don't have the money to buy a house, hold a ceremony or raise a baby. My parents will pay for our house and ceremony," he said.

Li Tianxia, a graphic designer and 80s child, blames

distrust and fear of responsibility for her reluctance to wed. "I do not trust myself. I'm not ready for all the responsibilities of marriage. And if I cannot even trust myself, how can I trust my partner? We're just children who are overindulged by our parents. We're not used to taking care of other people."

But more to blame than spoiled singletons and bad cartoons could be education. Tang Yin, a grad student at the Communication University of China, said higher education has made her even more terrified of tying the knot. While higher education may have broadened her horizons it also delayed her chance to start a family.

Social progress or threat to development?

The years of dazzling economic growth begat a generation of little "emperors" and "empresses," whose only focus is themselves. "Many are unable to sustain relationships because they are used to being doted on by their parents and grandparents. They lack the tolerance needed to succeed in marriage," Hu Shenzhi, a marriage counselor with the All-China Women's Federation, said.

Blindness is also a feature of 80s marriage. "Many couples regret their impulsive decisions to marry after knowing someone only three months," said Zhou Libiao, an official at the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Civil Affairs' marriage registration office.

Many young couples choose to divorce rather than work out their differences. Simplified divorce procedures have also made it easier to terminate a marriage, Li Qiang, a professor from the psychology department at Nankai University, said.

"Before the country opened, marriage and the economy had no overlap. Marriage was a subsistence problem: Love had nothing to do with it. However, 80s children focus most on feeling love. If they can't feel it anymore, they immediately move to divorce," Ming, from the DCRC, said. "This generation is more aggressive in its pursuit of happiness, and it is braver about ending an unhappy marriage."

However, Chen does not agree. "The high rate of divorce and fear of marriage contradicts human relationships and betrays an emotional crisis in society," she said.

The high divorce rate will cause other problems. Chen said, Most 80s children are still medium to low-income earners, who once divorced will contribute to the housing shortage. The number of single moms and people paying on home and car loans will also go up.

She said it is a snowball that will eventually lead to a higher crime rate and widespread drug and alcohol abuse. "Then we will need more police, more prisons, more courts, more rehab centers and more psychologists. That kind of spending could kill the economy," Chen said.

Pre-marital classes needed

"The lack of premarital education about true love, marriage, sex, ethics and family values is a major reason why 80s children can't stay together, but neither the government nor any NGOs in China are trying to solve this," Chen said.

"Falling in love, choosing the right spouse and marrying are among the hardest steps in one's life. So why aren't we taking the time to prepare people for it?" Chen said. Newly married 80s couples receive no premarital training or education.

"The basic social unit – the family – will be wrecked, and in its place will come selfishness and hedonism. The US is a living example of this," she said.

Although it is impossible to prohibit or block divorce, the generation must learn to manage and maintain a marriage and family. "No success can replace marriage and family ... Success in a career is transient, but marriage is a lifetime," Chen stressed.

Luxury hotel glut too much of good thing

(Chicago Tribune) – Financial crisis? What financial crisis?

The owners of a new, ultraluxury hotel in Beijing maintain an air of confidence in the face of adversity. The 234-room Pangu Plaza, which opened in December, charges as much as US \$17,750 (121,500 yuan) a night for a suite. The sushi bar, where the cheapest lunch special is US \$265, cooks its rice in mineral water flown in from Japan. The walls in the hotel are covered with silk; the floors with marble – Italian, of course.

“The Chinese new rich have plenty of money. We have Bentleys pulling up with no plate numbers, so you can tell that they’re brand new,” said room manager Dennis Seng, scoffing at the suggestion of inauspicious timing for opening a luxury hotel.

“The other day, a Russian couple ran up a US \$4,000 tab at an intimate lunch for two in the Japanese restaurant,” he said.

His confidence, however, is belied by the cavernous, empty lobby, where the only

sound is the tapping of the high heels of the crisply attired staff. No paying customers were evident during a weekday afternoon visit, although Seng said occupancy has reached “up to 30 percent.”

If that is the case, the Pangu is faring far better than dozens of other newly opened hotels here.

It might be simply a glut of luxury. “Everything that the developers are building is ‘luxury’ or ‘imperial’: luxury apartments, luxury shopping mall, luxury hotels,” said Hu Xingdou, an economics professor at the Beijing Institute of Technology. “But this is not what the Chinese people need or can afford.”

Whereas Pangu overlooks such 2008 Summer Olympic landmarks as the Bird’s Nest and the Water Cube, the new Regent Hotel boasts a panoramic view of the Forbidden City.

Adjacent to the Summer Palace is the new Aman hotel, part of which is located in original imperial guesthouses. The cheapest room is US \$480 in the off-season.

Analysis Hotels hit by downturn

By Huang Daohen

“Even if it was not for the financial crisis and business runs as usual, this would have been a tough year for the hotel industry,” Danielle Chen, a director of a hotel consulting company in Beijing, said. “You had so many new hotels opening in the lead-up to the Olympics and afterward.”

The country’s hotel market saw a big expansion during the Beijing Olympics last year. Chen said his company counted 126 hotels that opened in the capital, adding 29,000 rooms. Hotels that missed their deadlines for completion are still catching up.

But the Olympics were a disappointment to the industry. Hotels expected to be fully booked during the Games, but instead, they were only 67 percent occupied, according to STR Global, a hotel research firm.

The market then suffered record lows starting last September.

Chen said occupancy in January and February was worse than expected, and that many deluxe five-star hotels are seeing fewer business travelers and more booking cancellations.

Companies are forced to trim travel expenses and many multinational firms are now holding telephone conferences to discuss business deals instead of having face-to-face meetings.

As a response, Chen said many hotels have offered promotions like reducing their room prices and giving free dinner coupons to attract more customers.

Media reports say that a four-star hotel in the CBD has reduced its room charges from 1,300 to 600 yuan per day.

The reality of the situation is that price cuts have become necessary to keep the revenue ball rolling, Chen said.

According to property services provider Jones Lang LaSalle, the revenue per available room at the city’s five-star hotels fell 16.6 percent to 911 yuan in 2008, while the average daily rate declined 3.9 percent to 1,541 yuan.

But Chen said he was optimistic of the hotel industry’s future.

“Tourism is expected to grow generally. We should not be worried about market potential,” he added.



The Pangu Plaza aims to capture the ultraluxury hotel market.

IC Photo

Fashion takes the stage at annual meeting

(Reuters) – For some delegates, China’s annual meeting of parliament is often as much about making a fashion statement as it is debating affairs of state.

The most colorful of the group are the ethnic minorities, who regularly get surrounded by reporters as keen to photograph them as to have pictures taken with them.

There are also actors, writers and entertainers, many of them finely turned out in the latest trends, bureaucrats, some in suits whose cuts and colors defy description, and other fashion faux pas that give the event a sort of carnival-like air.

All of the country’s 55 official minority groups are represented at the meeting of the largely rubber-stamp body, from Mongolians and Koreans to the Muslim Uighurs and shamanistic Oroqen, and almost all come dressed in traditional clothing.

That can take the shape of resplendent silk blouses, jingling silver headdresses, voluptuous fur hats or elegantly intricate embroidery – not necessarily everyday wear for all, though.

“This is traditional Manchu clothing. I designed this outfit, though I only wear it for big meetings,” said Na Hui, a Manchu from frigid Heilongjiang Province, dressed in a bright red, figure-hugging silk dress patterned with sparkly green sequins.

But Liu Qiaoying, a Buyei from southwestern Guizhou, said she was wearing her everyday outfit to parliament, whose session this year closes today.

“This is normal for me,” said Liu, a lavender-hued headdress tucked neatly into her hair, and wearing a similarly colored top tied over a simple cream blouse.

Xu Xiangdong, a Va who lives along the Myanmar border in Yunnan Province, likewise insisted he really was not wearing anything out of the ordinary, even with a few shells newly sown into his magenta cloth jacket and padded headdress.

“I’m happy if people want to take my picture,” Xu said. “I just haven’t had as many pictures taken of me this year as last.”

Police hot-wire sleepy drivers with chili



(Reuters) – Police in the southwest are spicing up drivers with raw chili in a bid to stop them falling asleep at the wheel, a newspaper said Wednesday.

Police in the Chongqing region have started serving drivers chili peppers at highway service stations, holding to the traditional Chinese belief that people often feel more sleepy in the spring, the *Chongqing Evening News* said.

Most of the drivers are from neighboring Sichuan, Yunnan and Hunan provinces, where chilies are a local favorite, it added.

“It’s really good to have some hot peppers when you are tired from driving,” van driver Chen Jun was quoted by the newspaper as saying. “They make you alert.”

The country’s roads have long been among the most dangerous in the world due to overloaded and speeding trucks and drivers who switch lanes without signaling and often ignore traffic lights.

Welcome to the new gold mines

(The Guardian) – Being paid to play games all day long sounds like a dream job – but for thousands of Chinese “gold farmers,” the virtual reality is sheer hard work.

Li Hua makes a living playing computer games. Working from a cramped office in the heart of Changsha, Hunan Province, he slays dragons and loots virtual gold in 10-hour shifts. Next to him, rows of other young workers do the same. “It is just like working in a factory, the only difference is that this is the virtual world,” Li said. “The working conditions are hard. We don’t get weekends off and I only have one day free a month. But compared to other jobs it is good. I have no other skills and I enjoy playing sometimes.”

Li is just one of more than 100 workers employed by Wow7gold, an Internet-based company that makes more than 15 million

yuan a year selling in-game advantages to World of Warcraft (WoW) players.

Customers may ask for their avatar’s skill level to be increased (“power leveling”), or for a virtual magic sword or precious ore to be obtained. As one player put it, “Where there’s a demand, China will supply it.”

For thousands of Chinese workers such as Li, “gold farming” is a way of life. Workers can expect to earn between 1,200 and 1,800 yuan a month. After completing his shift, Li is given a basic meal of rice, meat and vegetables and falls into a bunk bed in a room that eight other gold farmers share. His wages may be low, but food and accommodation are included.

The gold farming industry may be about playing games, but these companies take their work seriously. At

Wow7gold, a sophisticated division of labor splits workers into different departments, including production, sales, advertising and research. What’s interesting about this “virtual division of labor” is that traditional concepts of “men’s work” and “women’s work” still apply. While young, largely unskilled “playbourers” such as Li spend their days toiling in the virtual field, highly skilled female graduates receive higher salaries working as customer service operators.

Last year, the Chinese government acknowledged the rising significance of gold farming by introducing a 20 percent tax on the industry. But regulations on working hours, salaries, holidays and medical fees have not been extended with it. With no regulatory oversight, the working conditions in gold farms vary massively.



Xinhua Photo

AOL leaves China market, again

By Huang Daohen

Proving once again that America Online (AOL) cannot extend its business overseas, the company has decided to withdraw from China and its Beijing employees will soon be dismissed, yesterday's *Beijing Youth Daily* reported.

Some 100 employees in its Beijing office received layoff notices via email on Wednesday morning, the reporter said, quoting an unnamed AOL China employee that the compensation would be three months' salary.

AOL may keep 2 or 3 employees in Beijing to deal with public relations and may not close its Hong Kong and Taiwan businesses in the short term, the report said.

Phone calls to the office, located in the technology enclave of Tsinghua Science Park, were not answered. A poster on the office's front gate listed phone numbers for an outside public relations firm.

The AOL China Web site cn.aol.com is still up, but it has not been updated since Tuesday.

Analysts attribute AOL's move to the ongoing global financial crisis. A drop in ad revenue forced the company to lay off 700 employees – 10 percent of its staff worldwide, Wen Yixian, an industrial analyst with the Oriental Securities, said.

The high operating costs and low returns in the China market may be another reason for the retreat, Wen said.

AOL returned to the Chinese mainland Internet market in April 2008. It launched its official Chinese

Web site soon after. At that time, AOL also launched Chinese Web sites that targeted Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Prior to that, the company set up a joint venture with Chinese PC giant Lenovo in 2001. The two companies invested US \$100 million (684 million yuan) to set up FM365.com, a portal site. However, the joint venture was unsuccessful and closed in 2004.

As of press time, no news about whether AOL will also withdraw its Hong Kong and Taiwan businesses has been revealed.

Barbie opens flagship store in Shanghai

By Jin Zhu

Mattel, the world's biggest toy maker, opened its first Barbie flagship store on March 7 in Shanghai to expand its presence in the local market.

The six-floor store is on Shanghai's trendy Huaihai Road and sells all Barbie products: dolls, apparel, confections, stationery, bubble bath, outdoor toys and electronics.

It has a spa, cafe, design studio and fashion stage.

At its opening ceremony last Saturday night, Mattel released a new series of dolls called "Barbie's Chinese friends" and presented a new wedding dress

designed by Vera Wang.

"The charm of Barbie – is that through (it) I can appreciate, look back, and realize how we have changed through the years," Zhou Ying, a Shanghai resident and Barbie shopper, said. She said the store would be most popular with fashion-conscious Shanghai women of all ages.

"Asia is a region of opportunity for us, especially the great market in China," Richard Dickson, general manager of the Barbie brand at El Segundo, California, said.

Although the impact of the global financial crisis is hitting

China, retail sales have continued to grow at double-digit annual rates. Five percent of Mattel's annual sales – US \$3 billion (20.5 billion yuan) – are earned in China.

A Mattel spokesman said the typical American girl owns eight Barbies while Chinese girls and women are only starting to collect the dolls in their 20s and 30s.

"The company said there is plenty of room for sales to grow in China," Dickson said.

The company previously considered Milan or London for its flagship Barbie store, but settled on Shanghai after consid-

erable research. "The city has showed the most passion for the Barbie brand, not only among little girls, but among teenagers and adults too," he said.

The move is part of Mattel's strategy for the China market, Rudi Teruel, a professional collector who runs the only Barbie specialty store in Taipei, said.

"Since the market positioning is quite different from Chinese toy brands, and it is still less competitive in terms of its franchisers and product chain, I do not believe the flagship store will seriously affect the sale of Chinese toys," he said.

Market watch

Haier to quit manufacturing

By Huang Daohen

Haier, the country's white goods giant, says it will leave manufacturing to transform itself to a marketing company.

Zhang Ruimin, chairman and CEO, said Haier plans to shed most of its production to cut costs and better react to market trends.

"Haier will transform from a manufacturer to a service company," Zhang was quoted as saying at the company's recent routine conference.

With 29 manufacturing bases, eight comprehensive R&D centers and 19 overseas trade companies,

Haier became the world's fourth largest white goods manufacturer last year. However, development stalled since it became the nation's top electronic appliance maker, with an annual income of 101.6 billion yuan.

In 2007, Haier's annual operations income totaled 118 billion yuan, a profit ratio of 1.5 percent.

"Our strategy will be to outsource more and more," Zhang said, adding that the company was in talks with Taiwan manufacturers to run some or most of Haier's factories.

Experts say it's a wise move

for Haier to change its business model. Outsourcing is a way to cope with the present economic situation, Zhao Xiao, an economist at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, said.

"Competition in the white goods sector has become fierce and is no longer driven by technological revolution," he said.

Haier's earlier advantage in production costs vanished. However, in Taiwan many original equipment manufacturers' (OEM) factories, such as AOC, Proview and Quanta, have significantly cut their costs.

Referring to Haier's acquisition of General Electric's home appliances, Zhao said domestic companies should be cautious. "We still lack the ability to integrate the two different corporate cultures following a cross-border merger," he said.

Though the financial crisis offers opportunities for snapping up companies, price is not the only consideration, he said.

"Domestic companies should first establish a more competitive business model of their own, then mergers will work better," he said.

Coca-Cola invests US \$2 bln in market

By Venus Lee

US beverage giant Coca-Cola announced a plan to invest US \$2 billion (13.6 billion yuan) in China over the next three years after opening its new US \$90 million R&D center in Shanghai last Friday.

The company will invest the money over the next three years to construct new factories and improve its distribution, sales, marketing and research and development, CEO Muhtar Kent said in Shanghai.

"With China now being the third-largest market for Coca-Cola, the new investment will help fuel future growth of the company and capitalize opportunities with greater speed," Coca-Cola said in a statement.

The company invested US \$1.6 billion in China from 1979 to the present. "Coca-Cola is proud to be a long-term partner of China, and our commitment and confidence in China never wavers," Kent said.

A company spokesman said the new investment announcement does not include its US \$2.4 billion bid to purchase Huiyuan Juice Group, one of the largest juice companies. That deal was announced last year, though it is still being investigated by the Ministry of Commerce on suspicion of having violated antitrust laws.

Huiyuan controls 40 percent of the pure juice domestic market.

Lin Zheyang, vice director of the ministry's Department of Foreign Investment Administration, said the bid may have trouble being accepted due to Huiyuan's status as a well-known domestic brand and the deal's potential impact on China's juice industry.

Experts and media took his comments as a negative signal, though the approval date remains set for March 23.

"Coca-Cola is in contact with the government, but has no further information regarding the approval process," Kenth Kaerhoeg, group communications director of Coca-Cola Pacific Group, said.

While the recession has hurt spending in the US, beverage giants are betting demand from China's 1.3 billion consumers will continue to grow.

HSBC, StanChart to keep up China expansion

HSBC Holdings and Standard Chartered, the two biggest foreign banks in China, said Wednesday they would continue to expand in the country despite global cost-cutting by banks struggling to weather the financial crisis.

HSBC China, whose pretax profit surged 85.2 percent last year to about 2.2 billion yuan, plans to add 18 new outlets this year and hire 1,000 employees to support the expansion, it said in a statement.

Rival Standard Chartered aims to add 11 to 15 sub-branches in China, its China consumer banking head Wilson Chia said in an interview.

He said the bank would continue to invest in people, but gave no projections for staffing levels in China, which have risen five-fold to 2,000 over the past three years.

The China expansion plans at HSBC contrast with its plans to shut its US consumer lending business, cutting 6,100 jobs. (Agencies)

Liu Xiang at forefront of debates on political reps' qualification

By Zhao Hongyi

Liu Xiang, the athlete who has rewritten the world record for the men's 110-meter hurdle, cannot seem to shake off controversy and criticism. First it was for dropping out of the hurdle finals at the Beijing Games due to an injury. Now it's about politics.

After clocking 12"88 at a race in Lausanne, Switzerland in 2006, Liu became a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) the following year. But, local media say Liu has never attended the annual CPPCC national conferences in Beijing and has not raised any proposals or bills for discussion.

Liu said his absence has been due to foot injuries suffered on the track. Since December, he has undergone surgery, followed by rehabilitation and basic training in Houston, Texas. He came back to Shanghai last Sunday.

The Chinese Athletic Association, Liu's employer, is trying to salvage the runner's reputation. Feng Shuyong, the association's spokesman, said "Liu has been keeping track of the conference's progress. Though he hasn't raised any proposals, for years he has been focusing on helping retired athletes."

But the public has refused to listen to explanations, with some people saying Liu should quit the CPPCC. In a survey on Sohu.com, 89.77 percent of respondents say Liu's absence from the conference

is a serious problem. Meanwhile, 80.36 percent say Liu should resign from the body.

On Wednesday, Liu finally showed up in Beijing to attend the second half of the CPPCC conference.

The athlete's behavior is not unique. Some members of the National People's Congress (NPC) and CPPCC have been absent from the annual conferences for years, Liu Shikun, a CPPCC representative, said on Sunday.

"The membership is not an honorary title," said the 70-year-old renowned pianist who has been a representative since he was 25. "You should fulfill your duty faithfully, otherwise, give up the position."

"One of my colleagues in the cultural and arts committee of the CPPCC has been absent from the annual conference for five consecutive years," he said.

But the elderly man has changed his tune, saying he "understood the absence of some members because of business reasons." Most of the NPC and CPPCC representatives are successful national figures in their respective fields and take the legislation positions only as a part-time job.

Sometimes the post can even come as news, just like what happened with Liu Xiang. "My coach and I were not clear about the whole process, but I was still very surprised and excited after learning that I became a member," he said.



Better late than never, hurdler Liu Xiang finally debuted on the political stage this week.
CFP Photo

Comment Negative impact

Absence will definitely have an impact on the re-election of CPPCC members.

— Zhao Qizheng, CPPCC spokesman

Reasons behind absence

Liu Xiang has good reasons for his absence. Last year, all his attention was on preparing for the Beijing Olympic Games, and this year he was under medical treatment. We'll continue to recommend him for membership if he performs excellently in the future.

— Yu Zaiping,

vice minister of the State Administration of Sports

Outstanding not equal to being representative

Being an outstanding person does not automatically mean one can take the role of an NPC or CPPCC member, like sports champions or entertainment stars. It all depends on whether they have the capability to fulfill the demands of the position.

— Nanfang Daily

Professionalism needed

Look at the members of the NPC and CPPCC! They are all successful in their own careers and businesses. They should be full-time members and more professional with their work.

— a netizen

Proposal suggests returning to traditional characters

By Huang Daohen

The nation should abandon the use of simplified Chinese characters and return to the traditional writing system, representative Pan Qinglin said in a proposal submitted at the ongoing NPC (National People's Congress) and CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) sessions.

Pan, 53, a CPPCC representative from Tianjin, suggested the government take a decade to switch back to the old system. "The simplification in the 1950s was done too hastily and betrayed the fundamental aesthetic principles underlying characters, which is to faithfully reflect Chinese culture," he said.

"Simplified characters have

lost the deep meaning that traditional ones contain," Pan said. He cited "love" as an example, saying the component for "heart" found in the traditional character can no longer be found in the simplified version, leaving it heartless.

Pan said the revival of traditional characters would also foster cross-strait unity by aligning the mainland and Taiwan, which still uses the traditional characters.

But the Ministry of Education said during a media briefing this week that there are no plans to revive the use of traditional characters. A survey by online portal Sina.com on Pan's proposal received a wide range of reactions, with the majority appearing to favor a status quo.

Simplified vs. Traditional Debate

The debate between traditional and simplified Chinese characters has been ongoing since the government started the simplification program in the 1950s, a period of vast illiteracy. The government's move was a way to increase literacy.

As the name implies, simplified characters are simpler — they require less strokes to write

and are easier to read when written in smaller script. But Chinese people in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and various Chinese communities overseas still use traditional characters.

Because of its implications on cultural and political identity, the issue continues to generate heated reactions from supporters on both sides.

Expert view

We should not have simplified the characters back then, but neither should we return to the traditional system now.

One factor that cannot be overlooked today is that simplified characters have been in use on the mainland for more than half a century. At least two generations of Chinese people, apart from those in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, have grown

up using the simplified version.

Writing is made up of symbols established by usage, and since the simplified characters have been in use for a long time, it is not easy to change them. And repeated changing will lead to confusion.

I personally believe that the simplification was a mistake, but returning to tradi-

tional characters will also be a mistake.

Chinese characters should have permanence, and thus, a cautious attitude should be adopted toward both simplification and a return to traditional forms. Any action requires careful consideration so that we do not act rashly again.

— Shen Dalin, commentator with *Orient Today*

Comment

Characters evolve

Chinese characters have evolved since ancient times, and simplification is just part of the evolution. If people love traditional characters so much, then they should go back to the use of jiaguwen (inscription on oracle bones) and stay in the past forever, since jiaguwen is the most traditional of all.

— Tie Chi, teacher

Should be an option

I'm a foreigner and only know traditional characters, so I really hope China will reintroduce the traditional version

for people who want to use it.

— Jean, visiting scholar

No benefit to cross-strait relations

I fail to see how returning to the use of traditional characters accomplishes anything. I don't think Taiwan is going to rejoin the mainland just because China has switched writing systems; nor does it have much to do with preserving ancient culture.

— Alex, IT consultant

Both serve a purpose

Both forms serve a purpose, and both are useful for

learning. Keep the traditional for calligraphy and art, but in our contemporary times, keep the simplified for everyday writing.

— Simon Zhang, designer

Simplified version promotes literacy

I am among the non-Chinese who support simplified characters. Whether they look good or not, can you deny that simplified characters have allowed tens, if not hundreds, of millions more people to be literate in Chinese?

— Mike, engineer

A foreign correspondent's letters from China

By Wang Yu

Foreign journalists are a special group of expats: they serve as information channels between China and other countries. The world creates an image of China partly through the stories they write. With their distinctive role in documenting foreign affairs and history, readers are always curious to know of the lives reporters lead.

Reporting the Iraq war

Evan Osnos, Beijing bureau chief of the *Chicago Tribune* and a contributor to *The New Yorker*, first came to the Chinese capital as a student in the 1990s. He returned in 2005 as a foreign correspondent. Prior to his posting here, Osnos was based in the Middle East for two years, where he reported on the US invasion of Iraq and the local insurgency.

"There was an immense political drama unfolding, but the deepest impressions I took away were of the individuals I came to know and admire during my time there," Osnos said. "War reporting is such a specific experience that it is hard to replicate the emotional experience. I left Iraq in February 2005, and I was not optimistic. Things have improved since then, and someday perhaps I'd like to go back for a feel of what is likely to take shape in the future."

Methods of journalism

A political science major and a student of Mandarin, Osnos also took photography and film classes at university because of his interest in docu-



Evan Osnos

Photo provided by Evan Osnos

mentary work. "Journalism is in the same spirit as it is about trying to document and understand the world around us. My father was a journalist. He left

the business when I was still young, but I liked the idea that it would allow you see the world and be paid for doing so," he said.

The awards he received came as a bonus. His coverage of China has been recognized with the Asia Society's Osborn Elliott Prize for Excellence in Journalism on Asia, the Overseas Press Club award for coverage of the environment, and the Livingston Award for foreign reporting. "I tend to look and listen and read a lot before I feel ready to ask any questions. In an age in which so much information is available all the time, it feels like a waste of the reader's time not to ensure that the article advances in some small way our collective understanding of the subject," Osnos said.

"When so much energy on the Web is devoted to opinion and evaluation, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that the single most important thing a reporter can do is tell people something they don't already know," he added.

"Letter From China" is the name of Osnos' column in *The New Yorker*, which talks of daily life in China. To him, it is not so different from reporting breaking news.

"I like to wallow in subjects for a while before I figure out what the story is," Osnos said. "Phil Pan of the *Washington Post* was one of the greatest China-based reporters in recent years because he always pursued stories or angles that people were reluctant to tell."

View of the country

Osnos recently unveiled the

identity of the author of "All of China is a Shanzhai," an article that became popular among Chinese netizens. The writer was a local who used a Western byline as an experiment to see if Chinese readers would respond differently to criticism that seemingly came from abroad.

"The 'shanzhai' phenomenon' is one of the biggest issues of this era in China. On the one hand, it shows the powers of creativity and resourcefulness, on the other hand, as some Chinese writers have said, it undermines true, deeper creativity," Osnos said. "I don't think it's unique to China that often we sometimes look at outsiders' appraisals with more curiosity, simply because our own analysis is familiar to us."

Osnos is impressed with China and one of the most interesting processes at work in the country today: the search for a new ideological center for its development.

He believes foreign journalists can also help the bigger world understand China. "Before the Olympics, Chinese leaders gave foreign correspondents the legal right to travel freely throughout China, which was a wise and welcome decision because it allowed foreign reporters to see China with their own eyes and deepen their knowledge without relying on outdated impressions or rumors."

"Whenever an area is closed, journalists will be concerned about what is happening there, and I know that foreign reporters were able to raise their level of expertise on China when they were allowed to travel as widely within China as they would in other countries," Osnos said.

Japanese master promises a traditional kunqu show

By Han Manman

The Sino-Japan version of *The Peony Pavilion* produced by Japanese Kabuki master Tamasaburo Bando is scheduled to be staged this weekend in Suzhou, the birthplace of Kunqu opera.

Tamasaburo, 60, will play the lead female role of Du Liniang in the Kunqu masterpiece. He said the new version would not be a fusion of Kabuki and Kunqu, but rather a traditional performance of the Chinese opera.

"Japanese people grow up hearing many Chinese legends, and Suzhou is the legend of all legends. 'From Han Shan Temple outside the city of Suzhou, the midnight bell reached as far as my boat ...' After hearing this famous Tang Dynasty poem, Japanese people, including me, cannot resist the temptation to one day visit the city," Tamasaburo said in Suzhou early this week.

Two decades ago, Tamasaburo, the most prestigious *onnagata*, or a man who plays women's parts in Kabuki, saw *The Peony Pavilion* in Tokyo for the first time. Although the actors used a language he did not understand, he was drawn to the art form. From then on, he tried all means to learn Kunqu and dreamt of one day playing a character in *The Peony Pavilion*.

Finally, last year, Tamasaburo and his team went to Suzhou to prepare for the staging of the opera's China-Japan version.

"Tamasaburo doesn't know Chinese. It's hard for him to memorize all the lyrics and tunes, let alone perform in Chinese on stage," said Wang Fang, vice president of the Suzhou Kunqu Opera Theater where Tamasaburo's opera will be staged.

"He is already a big and influential artist in Japan, yet he's pursuing a new goal with the same high standards. I admire him a lot for his courage and competence to meet such a big challenge," said Wang, who has played the role of Du Liniang for three decades, starting when she was 10.

Since Japan and China's traditional cultural arts are facing the same threats of extinction, Tamasaburo said the best way to preserve them was not to relegate them to museums, but to update them so they continue to be relevant in present times.



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US firms in China prepare for falling revenue

By Han Manman

"China continues to be a place of investment, we need to just get through this tough year," John Watkins, chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in China, said Tuesday.

His words came the same day his organization released its 2009 Business Climate Survey. The AmCham China poll, in which 400 members participated, shows that nearly 40 percent of US firms here have delayed or canceled further investment plans as the global economic downturn triggered con-

cerns over future revenues.

As an important barometer of the health and concerns of US companies in China, the annual survey reveals that 37 percent of AmCham's member-firms are postponing further investments in the country. About 2 percent canceled plans altogether.

It also shows 35 percent of the respondents projected a fall in revenues this year, compared with just 13 percent expecting declines a year ago.

A quarter of the firms polled said they have downsized their work forces in China since November,

while 21 percent said they planned to cut jobs this year.

Similar to last year's survey, finding qualified management-level talent is still considered the top challenge for US companies in China. Other concerns here include the lack of government transparency and intellectual property rights infringements.

"Local competition" is another challenge for US firms, with nearly 60 percent citing pressure from local rivals as the top factor influencing their margins.

Despite the tough business

climate, Watkins said over half the respondents were still optimistic about China's outlook in the coming five years, and that most US companies still consider the country one of the top three investment destinations.

"We can take this crisis as an opportunity. Sometimes, tough times are also better times for investments," James McGregor, chairman of McGregor & Company, said, adding that when some industries suffer, this opens a chance to explore other fields.

"There would be commercial

potential in fields such as automobiles, environmental protection and energy for the Chinese market," said McGregor, author of the best seller *One Billion Customers: Lessons for the Front Lines of Doing Business in China*.

He joked that because of the economic crisis, foreign companies may find it easier to negotiate with local officials who are eager to attract foreign investment.

McGregor also suggested that China's large market—especially in the rural areas—still provides huge opportunities for US companies.

UN World Food Program marks 30 years of China ties



By Venus Lee

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the Chinese government hosted a photo exhibition at the China World Trade Center last week to mark three decades of cooperation.

Showcasing over 100 photos, the exhibit themed "Defeating Hunger, Fighting Poverty," looked back at the past 30 years during which WFP and China worked to battle hunger and poverty in developing countries.

"There are many poverty-stricken areas in China, but many youths in metropolises don't know that poverty is still a global problem that human beings have to face," Anthea Webb, director of WFP China, said.

She said the WFP aims to share with other developing countries China's experience with fighting hunger and poverty "so that they may also see similar dramatic improvements in poor peoples' livelihoods," Webb said. "China is now immune to the rise of international food prices because of her great investment in agricultural and rural areas over the past 30 years. I think China's achievement can be owed to the government's strong will, commitment and investments."

"Although China has achieved food self-sufficiency, we will still work together to face challenges and focus on food security issues," Webb said.

At the exhibition's opening ceremony, Yao Xiangjun, deputy director-general of the Ministry of Agriculture's Department of International Cooperation, remarked at the efficacy of the work between China and the WFP. "I hope WFP would make an even greater contribution to those who are still experiencing hunger and poverty in the world," Yao said.

From 1979 to 2005, WFP provided US \$1 billion (8 billion yuan) worth of food and logistical support to 30 million people in China. In the 21st century, given China's rapid economic growth and achievement of food self-sufficiency, WFP ceased local operations at the end of 2005. But the UN body has maintained a presence in the country to engage China's expertise in other WFP operations. Since 2006, the Chinese government has committed nearly US \$30 million for WFP's work elsewhere in the world, much of that going to people in Africa.

A photo from the exhibition "Defeating Hunger, Fighting Poverty" sponsored by the UN WFP. Photo provided by WFP

Diplomats learn Chinese folk art



Diplomats from 20 embassies and foreign chambers participated in a folk culture exchange event in Beijing last weekend sponsored by *The World of Chinese* magazine. Guests learned how to do folk embroidery, make hairy monkeys and create traditional Chinese Cloissonne. Photo by Jiang Tao

UN report highlights child death and childbirth risks

By Huang Daohu

As many as 7,000 women in the country die in childbirth every year, a UNICEF report released in Beijing yesterday said. Though the figure is down 59 percent from the 1990s, it represents 1.3 percent of the world's maternal deaths and women in remote rural areas face higher risks.

Meanwhile, early newborn death in China, or neonatal mortality, at 60 percent tops the list of preventable causes of child death, according to the State of the World's Children 2009, a study released on the 30th anniversary of UNICEF's program in China.

The main causes of neonatal mortality are asphyxia, low birth weight and infection. Many of these deaths can easily be prevented, the report said.

"Whilst China has made great progress in maternal and child health in recent years, this report highlights that further gains can be made in reducing maternal and newborn mortality," Yin Yin Nwe, UNICEF representative to China, said.

"In rural areas almost 1.6 times as many mothers die in childbirth as in urban centers, and neonatal mortality still accounted for a staggering 229,200 child deaths in 2007," Nwe said.

The report shows China has the world's fifth highest number of child deaths per year, with an estimated 382,000 children dying before their fifth birthday in 2007.

A key concern for maternal and newborn health in the country is the large disparity between the situation in coastal and urban areas, and remote rural communities. According to the report, infant and child mortality is almost 2.7 times higher in the western than eastern regions, 2.4 times higher in rural than urban areas, and 2 to 5 times higher in the poorest rural counties than in large cities.

The report suggests that additional efforts should be made to ensure all women have access to quality obstetrical services, especially in hard-to-reach parts of the country. In addition, it draws attention to the importance of care for newborn babies.

'Best wines under 100 yuan' known tomorrow

By Annie Wei

The world may be in an economic slump, but there is an upside to this for wine fans on a tight budget. The first Grape Wall of China Challenge, which aims to identify the best wines under 100 yuan, kicks off at Maxim's restaurant today.

Two expats and a local who have been working in the food and beverage industry for years will host the event. Nicolas Carre, manager of Maxim's; Jim Boyce, author of an English wine blog; and Zhao Fan, from Pro-wine, teams up with six wine experts and another six judges representing ordinary consumers to sample 60 types of wine.

Two of every three judges are Chinese, because the organizers want to learn more about the taste of local wine consumers. To remain objective, representatives of wine manufacturers or distributors were not invited to the event.

Judging takes place from 9 am to 5 pm, and media representatives are only permitted to talk to the judges between the morning white wine session and the afternoon red wine session. Results will be released 24 hours after the contest.

Organizers said they will not announce a ranking of "best wine," "second best" and so on. "We want to understand the taste of the Chinese people, and there may be big differences in the result from industry professionals and ordinary consumers," Carre said.



A wine event at Maxim's



From left to right, Nicolas Carre, Jim Boyce and Pierre Cardin

Photos by provided Nicolas Carre

Information behind the event

Beijing Today chatted with Carre ahead of the challenge to get some inside information on the event.

BJ Today: How did the idea for the wine challenge come about?

Carre: We had been talking with Jim Boyce for a long time about doing a different project, such as wine tasting, to inform consumers about this industry which many people here do not seem to understand. (Carre explains that many local and expat customers do not know which brands to go for, and some cheap brands were overpriced.) We finally decided our first project would focus on wines under 100 yuan, which is important under the recession. We also decided to involve Chinese consumers in the process, which is a very important point for us, since we are interested in learning more about what Chi-

nese people like. Then we asked Frankie Zhao of Pro-Wine Consulting to join because he has been tasting, studying, and writing about wine in China for a decade.

BJ Today: I heard that 20 wine companies sent samples. How many of them were local and foreign? Was it difficult to get wine companies like Zhangyu or Great Wall and smaller local companies to participate?

Carre: We decided at the start to only include distributors who contacted us through Boyce's blog (Grape Wall of China). We ended up with a mix of foreign-owned and locally owned companies, including most of the biggest wine importers in China, such as ASC, Torres, and Summergate. That means this contest really covers a significant part of the wine market. As for the Chinese wine producers, we plan a

second contest that focuses on Chinese wines and that has a strong focus on smaller operations, since there are wineries out there that make decent wines but don't have much exposure.

BJ Today: Was it difficult to get average consumers to sign up as judges?

Carre: Not at all. We found that local consumers were very excited to have the chance to be a judge, and we also had dozens of people contact us who simply wanted to come and watch the contest. The expert judges, such as winemaker Li Demei and professor Ma Huiqin of China Agricultural University, were also very positive about involving local consumers. We all have a common interest in learning more about local wine tastes and in encouraging consumers to be their own judge.

Event

Criminal Minds with Ridley Pearson and Catherine Sampson

Whodunit? If you want to know what makes great crime writing, the answer lies with *New York Times* bestselling author Ridley Pearson and Beijing's favorite crime writer Catherine Sampson. Moderated by Paul French.

When: March 13, 5:30-7 pm
Where: The Bookworm, Building 4, Nan Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6586 9507

TREK Peloton Road Bike Club

The club is a community of expat and Pan-Asian road bike and mountain bike riders. It has divisions based on speed and level of fitness, and ride every Saturday and Sunday to quiet roads or mountains outside the city. Rental bikes are available. The club also organizes community events, fundraisers and beer-drinking sessions while watching races on TV.

When: March 14, 8 am - 12:30 pm
Where: Chaoyang Park
Email: tom@cyclosportschina.com

Litang's Colors

This photo exhibition presents images from Litang, a town in the heart of the mountainous region of Kham, 4,000 meters above sea level, in the eastern part of Sichuan Province. The pictures were taken in 2002 during the annual horse racing festival which lasts the entire first week of August.

When: March 14, 10 am - 6 pm
Where: 26.2 Space Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
Email: evita.ruiz@gmail.com

Exchange items

Something you want to get rid of may be heaven-sent to another. 4banqiao Courtyard offers a place for people to exchange items to keep the value of things alive.

When: March 14, 1:30-6 pm
Where: 4banqiao Courtyard, Banqiao Hutong, 4 Beixinqiao, Dongcheng District.
Tel: 8403 0968

(By Wei Ying)

Scotland brings to town Ballerina Ballroom film festival

By He Jianwei

A film showing with beanbag chairs and that served home-made cakes and finger sandwiches drew huge crowds last August to Nairn, a small town in northeast Scotland. From March 20 to 23, the same film festival will be held at the China Film Archive.

The festival called Ballerina Ballroom Cinema of Dreams, will screen five feature films and seven short films, which represent 60 years of Scottish filmmaking from the 1940s to 2008.

The event was spearheaded in 2008 by Oscar-winning actress Tilda Swinton and Scottish film director and producer Mark Cousins. They organized the nine-day film screening as an experimental, grassroots alternative to the commercialized glamor of contemporary film festivals.

An old ballroom called the Ballerina was chosen as the venue, where Pink Floyd, The Who and Cream played in the 1960s and 70s. The festival "would transform the [ballroom] into something like a

ghost train," Swinton said.

The films to be screened in Beijing include Scottish director Bill Douglas' trilogy of biographical films about growing up in poverty and deprivation; and *I Know Where I'm Going* from 1945, acclaimed a masterpiece by Martin Scorsese.

"Scotland has a world-class reputation for the quality of its film production. Many Scottish films are available in different languages around the world, and visual art, music and literature allow us to transcend language barriers as we

seek to promote Scotland's identity across the world," Alex Salmond, Scotland's First Minister, said.

Cousins and Swinton will attend all the screenings. Swinton will also give a lecture to graduate students at the Beijing Film Academy later.

The event is the latest in a series highlighting cultural exchange between Scotland and China in film.

In 2007, Scotland hosted one of the largest overseas exhibitions of Chinese films, "Cinema China," which brought 26 films on a tour around the UK.



One of the festival films, *I Know Where I'm Going*

Photo provided by organizer

3,000 household artifacts go on exhibition



Ceramic hot-water bottle

By Zheng Lu

Food stamps, a 60-year-old cheongsam, an antiquated washing machine, a trunk painted with "literature and art must serve the workers, peasants and soldiers." Stepping into the Old Artifacts Workshop of the Chaoyang Cultural Center will transport visitors to the China of decades past.

The exhibition has collected from ordinary citizens as many as 3,000 old household articles like carpentry tools, kitchen utensils and clocks that date back to the early 1900s. The collection will move to the Capital Museum in autumn, then to Hong Kong for a huge exhibition later this year.

Shen Linying, the workshop's curator, said that in the last few years people have begun to realize the value of their old things, and many of them have donated items to the center. She said that when the workshop was set up a decade ago, its collection was largely made up of objects bought from junk dealers.

Shen said most donors are senior citizens who are afraid the younger generations would just throw away their worn-out possessions. "They often say they feel relieved to send to us old stuff like a wardrobe that has been used for decades," she said. "An 88-year-old woman donated 16 cheongsams belonging to her and her mother-in-law, which they wore during the Republic of China period."

Shen said some of the items reflect people's creativity and resourcefulness at a time when materials were scarce. An example is the pony collar, which was pop-



Heavy old-iron

Photos by Zheng Lu

ular in the 1960s. Shen said most people could only afford to buy a few shirts; there also was not enough fabric on the market, so people instead looked for bits of cloth to make collars. "As they changed collars, they felt like they were putting on a different shirt," she said.

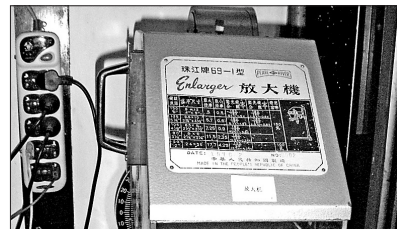
When the exhibition moves to the Capital Museum, volunteers will be brought in to enact scenes from the past, Shen said.

"People will do things such as washing clothes with a washboard and having their heads shaved by barbers who walk around plying their trade," she said. The museum will accept as many as 150 people, including foreigners, who want to experience their barber's services.

People who are interested in seeing the workshop or signing up for barber services should call 8599 4649.



Pony collars were popular in 1960s due to scarcity of fabric.



Machine for developing films

Shanghai World Expo tickets to go on sale

By Wang Yu

The Shanghai 2010 World Expo is a step closer. On March 2, expo organizers authorized four domestic agents and nine outside the mainland to sell tickets for the event.

China Mobile, China Telecom, Bank of Communications and the China Post Group are the local groups on the list. The other distributors include the China Travel Service in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau, and the Japanese Tourism Board Corporation. Tickets will go on sale March 27.

Yang Haikang, a China Mobile representative, said the company will authorize over 800 privately owned offices to sell the tickets. Electronic tickets will also be released in the future. Interested parties can reserve tickets by mobile phone, and ticket information will be stored in the phone's sim card. People can also book tickets on the Web site or through the hotline numbers of the three other domestic agents.

Zhou Hanmin, vice president of the China National Democratic Construction Association, said Monday that at least 6.2 million expo tickets are expected to be sold. No free tickets will be given away.

Advance ticket sales will be divided into three phases. Phase one will begin March 27, in which government offices, enterprises and institutions can buy Peak Day Single Day Admission tickets and Standard Day Single Day Admission tickets.

The next phase will begin July 1, during which the two types of tickets will be sold to both groups and individuals.

The final phase will begin January 1, 2010 and end April 30, 2010. At this time, the following tickets will be available to groups and individuals: Peak Day Single Day Admission, Peak Day Special Admission, Standard Day Single Day Admission, Standard Day Special Admission, 3-Day Admission and 7-Day Admission.

The price of a Standard Day Single Day Admission tickets is 160 yuan. Standard Day Special Admission tickets are 100 yuan; Peak Day Single Day Admission 200 yuan; Peak Day Special Admission 120 yuan; and Evening Admission 90 yuan. Visitors can also buy 3-Day Admission and 7-Day Admission tickets for 400 and 900 yuan, respectively.

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

I heard that it's troublesome to get to Beijing's South Railway Station to travel to Tianjin. Is this true?

Not anymore. Take Subway Line 5 and get off at Zhaogongkou. Two bus stops away is the Beijing South Railway Station. You can also take a cab from Zhaogongkou to the railway station, which costs 14 yuan.

A one-way train ticket from Beijing to Tianjin costs 58 yuan. Weekends are the busiest period: People leave on Saturday morning to visit family members in Tianjin, and return to Beijing on Sunday evening.

Where can I find a coffeemaker that brews a large pot? I've already checked out Carrefour, but found theirs too small.

You can find such a coffeemaker from Metro Cash and Carry, (1 Xijian Gongmen Lu, Haidian District, Tel: 6286 9888; or 35 Dayangfang Lu, Chaoyang District, Tel: 8738 6888). Also try Taobao.com. Another option is to ask your favorite cafe for recommendations.

(By Wei Ying)

New measures up transportation convenience

By Wang Yu

Yikatong for Beijing-Tianjin Express on sale

There is finally some relief for the headaches of frequent travelers between Beijing and Tianjin. A new Yikatong card for the Beijing-Tianjin line was issued last Saturday, which enables passengers to make the trip without needing to purchase tickets. The new procedure is similar to hopping on a bus in the city and swiping your Yikatong card on the reader.

The card is available at the Beijing South Railway Station, the Tianjin Railway Station and the Tanggu Railway Station in Tianjin. Sales counters exclusively for the Yikatong cards have been set up at these stations.

Two types of cards are available: Classic and Gold. The former costs 1,000 yuan, which is equivalent to the maximum amount that can be charged to the card. The Gold Card costs 3,000 yuan, which has a 5,000-yuan credit limit.

The railway Yikatong will be valid for two years from the date of purchase and can only be used by one person at a time. A certain number of seats are reserved for card owners to make sure frequent travelers can leave any time they wish. Gold card-holders can occupy first or second-class seats, while Classic card-holders are limited to second-class seats.

Passengers at any of the three stations who choose to cancel their trip even after they have swiped their card can obtain a refund at the station within 90 minutes, a representative at the Beijing South Railway Station said.

Choose car license plate numbers online

New car owners in town can choose their car's license plate numbers online, anytime. According to the Beijing Traffic Management Bureau, drivers can choose plate numbers via the bureau's number management client system on www.bjtgl.gov.cn.

Owners need to provide their ID card number, VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) and the car's invoice number on the Web site. Foreigners who buy their cars in the city have to provide their passport number, the bureau said.

After completing the online registration, applicants have an option to have their plates delivered within two days. Owners can also print out their online application and collect their plates from any of the traffic management bureau's offices.

The bureau said the application should be completed within 20 minutes or the system will automatically shut down, and the driver has to start again. Car owners are advised not to use the system during the peak hours of morning and midnight to avoid heavy traffic online. Since the system does not have an English version yet, foreigners should ask for the assistance of a friend who can read Chinese.

Opera's revival

By He Jianwei

Last month, the National Center for Performing Arts (NCPA) festival with 13 operas from home and abroad performed between March 1 and 10.

To stage an opera is daring for the NCPA, because opera has a long history. Besides the performances, the NCPA will also popularize the art.

Although it is difficult to popularize opera in China, the party will stage an opera next spring.

A glorious past

Modern opera dates back to the end of the 16th century, but it first entered China in the early 20th century with other art forms such as drama and symphony.

Opera experienced two prosperous periods domestically: once in the middle of the 20th century and another was during the first 17 years after the founding of People's Republic of China.

The White-haired Girl, which debuted in April 1945, was regarded as a milestone for China's opera. It defined the country's aesthetic standards and provided a model for the development of new opera.

The first 17 years after 1949 saw the production of many classic operas and attracted several generations of fans.

Zou Jingzhi, a poet and playwright, is one such fan. When he was young, he studied for 10 years to sing tenor. He was one of the educated urban youths who was sent to work in the countryside during the 1960s and 1970s.

"I sang opera in the field when I was working in the Great Northern Wilderness (in Heilongjiang Province)," Zou said.

At that time, opera was known to all. "Almost everyone could hum a sentence from the opera of *Sister Jiang* or *The Red Guards on Honghu Lake*. Actually, many writers I know were training to be a tenor or baritone," he said.

In the 1986, one of "The Three Tenors" Luciano Pavarotti sang at the Beijing Exhibition Center Theater for the first time. Zou was a craftsman and earned 30 yuan a month: the ticket price was 8 to 10 yuan.

Audiences in Beijing lined up during the night to buy tickets. "I paid 30 yuan to buy an 8-yuan ticket on the black market. When Pavarotti sang his first sentence, I wept at the beautiful sound," he said.

Although Zou never got the chance to sing opera on stage, he still follows the scene and wrote his own opera, *Night Banquet*, in 1998. He is one of the ambassadors for the forthcoming opera festival.

High art value, small audience

But the reality is that opera – as it stands – is too high brow to be popular. "Opera is an art form that brings together music, drama, dance and literature. The music combines singers and musicians, and has a very high artistic value. But no matter whether it is in the Western world or in China, opera has a smaller audience than other artistic forms," Chen Zuohuang, director of music at the NCPA, said.

But its decline is understandable. "Opera was the product of industrial civilization. We are in the information age, and opera's golden age has passed," Dai Yuqiang, a tenor and one of the leading singers at the PLA Opera House, said. He is another ambassador for the opera festival.

There are fewer than 50 frequently performed operas in the world. The total number of performed operas is fewer than 100.

But since China is a developing country, still stuck in a confused mix

"A good story can attract people and touch them, and a beautiful aria is like a business card."

– Chen Zuohuang,
director of music at
the NCPA

"Why has the NCPA festival more and more popular in China? Because Yang Yiyi and Yi Jianlian are playing. Yang Yiyi has classical music listeners? Because Li Yundi won fame. If we have a international opera festival, it will be more popular."

– Zou Jingzhi,



hinges on a face

announced its Opera House would hold its first opera between April and July. It has a small following in China compared to symphony. It starts through lectures, exhibitions and fan clubs. Participants said they are confident the stage will welcome

NBA become popular in Yao Ming and Kobe Bryant. Why have we found more international Chinese stars, I think popular."

poet and playwright

"But [opera] is a process by which people can enrich their spiritual lives"

— Dai Yuqiang, tenor

between the agricultural, industrial and information ages, all kinds of artistic products can find a place here, Dai said.

He said he understands that young people like pop music, because pop culture is designed for easy access, "But [opera] is a process by which people can enrich their spiritual lives," he said.

Dai compared enjoying opera to drinking tea. "I find few young people like to drink tea. They prefer soft drinks. But the more experienced people like to drink tea. I believe people's tastes can change as they gain richer experiences," he said.

But Zou compared opera to cheese. "People who get used to the flavor will love it," he said, "For example, Paul Potts, a British tenor and the winner of Independent Television's *Britain's Got Talent*, sang an opera from *Turandot* and moved millions of viewers in 2007. Many people find beauty and power in opera."

Both opera ambassadors admitted that the creation of new opera is the biggest barrier to the art's development in China. "We will feel depressed when people speak about China's opera, but they cannot remember anything produced in the last three decades. Few recent works have been popular," Chen said.

They said an opera must have an attractive and dramatic story, and a beautiful aria. "A good story can attract people and touch them, and a beautiful aria is like a business card," he said.

"Beautiful rhythm can spread an operatic aria to the audience," Zou said.

Hope for the future

Although the audience is small and recent operas have not impressed, the two said that given enough time, opera can find a future.

In Western opera houses, they run a season from September to July, and each season includes 20 operas. Fans from around the world can order their tickets up to two years in advance, Dai said.

"They have a mature system. In China, this opera season is the first. We will perform 13 operas. It is a great step for opera's development," he said.

But perhaps most crippling is the lack of a face for China's opera.

"Why has the NBA become more and more popular in China? Because Yao Ming and Yi Jianlian are playing. Why has classical music found more listeners? Because Ma Youyou and Li Yundi won international fame. If we have a Chinese international opera star, I think it will be more popular," Zou said.

But he said more and more talented Chinese opera singers are appearing in international productions, so there is still hope.

As for the new operas, Chen said it was too early to say whether they were truly bad. "If an opera's debut is a flop, we can't say it is a bad work." That's history's job.

Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, for example, is one of the most frequently staged operas in the world. But it debuted a failure and Bizet was dead by age 36. Only after his death was *Carmen* rediscovered to be a great work.

Performance is just one way the audience can access opera. The NCPA will also host lectures, exhibitions and courses for opera fans.

The center hopes its festival can usher in a new spring for opera in China.

Madama Butterfly by Teatro La Fenice

Photo provided by the National Center for Performing Arts

An American boy from the imagination of Philip Roth



By Charles Zhu

Philip Roth, one of the top contemporary US novelists, has since the 1960s produced a series of unforgettable Jewish American heroes like Mickey Sabbath in *Sabbath's Theater*. Now to the long list of funny, tragic and bewildered Rothian characters is added Marcus Messner, from his recent novel *Indignation* (233pp, Houghton Mifflin, US \$26.00).

Marcus is a student at a small college in 1950s Newark, New Jersey while the Korean War is underway. He is the first in his family to have a higher education. His hard-working father is a kosher butcher in Weequahic, the Jewish section of Newark. "My father wore an apron that tied around the neck and around the back and it was always bloody, a fresh apron always smeared with blood within an hour after the store opened. My mother too was covered in blood."

As the nervous father hassles his son day and night to keep him from falling in with

the wrong crowd, Marcus transfers to another college in northern Ohio. He is assigned to a dorm with three other Jews. Marcus works as a waiter at a beer joint on Friday and Saturday nights. However, he cannot get enough sleep since one of his roommates plays records late into the night.

His life changes dramatically when he spots the lovely Olivier at the library, for whom he falls head over heels. On one of their dates, she – totally unexpected by the innocent Marcus – unbuttons his pants. It was certainly not her first time.

Marcus notices a scar on Olivier's wrist. He later learns that she, a daughter of divorced parents, tried to kill herself at her last school and has been at a clinic for the three months since.

Once, he gets a letter from the dean and is accused of failing to compromise with his fellow roommate. The dean angers Marcus more by asking why he did not state his religious preference when he enrolled, since his

father is a kosher butcher.

In the meantime, his father back home is becoming increasingly weird. He drives his car like a madman, argues with everybody – even the customers – and worries obsessively that his son in Ohio is living at the whorehouse.

After his mother meets Olivier, she asks Marcus not to have anything to do with her anymore. Though he promises not to see Olivier, he tries to look for her when he gets back to school. She is nowhere to be found. Later, he learns that Olivier is pregnant, has a nervous breakdown and was sent to a psychiatric hospital. The dean suspects Marcus as the father.

After a student riot breaks out on campus one snowy night, he is expelled from the college with eleven other students though he did not participate in the riot. Without his enrollment, he is drafted and sent off to Korea where he is killed in action.

It was the end his father always feared.

Even lyricists can't carry a book with no content

By He Jianwei

Pop music is not the only thing Chinese lyricists can write. Some of the more famous lyricists are donning the mantle of "writer" to sneak into the world of literature.

Last month, Yan Yunnong, a lyricist from Taiwan, published his first collection of 10 short stories *My Desired Happiness* (*Wo Yao De Xingfu*, 239pp, Shanghai Jinxiu Wenzhang Press, 26.80 yuan). The stories are based on 10 songs.

At the end of last year, another top Hong Kong lyricist Lin Xi, who has written the lyrics to some 2,500 songs, brought his collection of essays *It Turns Out You Are Not Unhappy* (*Yuanlai Ni Fei Bu Kuai*, 204pp, Guangxi Normal University Press, 24.80 yuan) to mainland readers.

Last year, another top Taiwanese lyricist Fang Wenshan famous for using historical references and ancient poems and literary quotations, finished his book *Blue and White Porcelain: Word's Secret Hidden In The Glaze Colors* (*Qinghuaci: Yincang Zai Youse Li De Wenzhi Mimi*, 197pp, The Writers Publishing House, 29.00 yuan).

The three have created generations of classic pop songs, but their fan base may be less interested in these new books. Good lyrics can be likened to a good poem: fewer words express more meaning. It is risky for a lyricist to try and expand on his original piece.

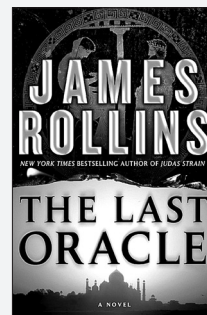
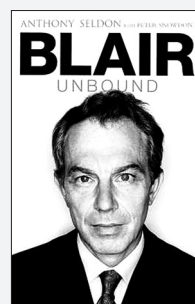
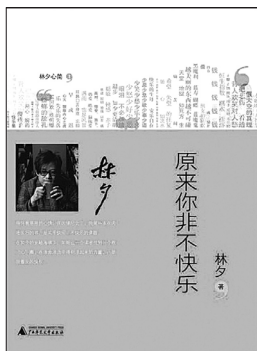
Fans were most disappointed in Lin's book. Although its name is taken from one of Lin's most famous songs, the content tells his experience of staying happy during the economic crisis. The book is like a Zen version of *Chicken Soup for The Soul*.

Fang's book reads more like a textbook for future lyricists. He lectures readers on how to organize beautiful lyrics, how to select the right words and how to touch the audience.

The commercial element is one reason many lyricists are writing books. Publishers understand the value of a good lyricist's name. Lin and Fang are the top lyricists in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and also have many fans on the mainland.

Yan found fame when he wrote the songs for *Cape No 7*, which grossed NT \$530 million (103 million yuan) at the Taiwan box office – a miracle for a local film. The movie soundtrack was also a top seller.

To attract readers, the writers' most familiar works are listed on the book jackets. Yan's book boldly displayed "Cape No 7" opposite his name, though the book's content has nothing to do with the movie.



CNPIEC Bookstore book listing

The China National Publication Import and Export Corporation's (CNPIEC) bookstore recommends these new arrivals to *Beijing Today* readers.

A Passion for Blue and White
By Carolyn Roehm, 288pp, Broadway, 420 yuan

This private tour of the homes of legendary trendsetter Carolyn Roehm shows her favorite color combinations in 300 photographs. From the time designer Roehm rented her first small apartment in New York in her 20s, she has loved blue and white. She draped the walls, chairs, sofa and a canopy bed of her one-bedroom flat in inexpensive blue and white sheets designed by her boss, Oscar de la Renta, and began collecting blue-and-white porcelain from around the world.

Blair Unbound
By Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon, 688pp, Pocket Books, 120 yuan

The first volume of Anthony Seldon's riveting and definitive biography of Tony Blair was published in 2004. Now, as the Labour Party and the country get

used to a new leader and new Prime Minister, Seldon delivers the most complete, authoritative and compelling account yet of Blair's premiership. Picking up after September 11, 2001, Seldon takes the reader up to the present when Blair handed over the reins of the UK to arch-rival Gordon Brown.

The Last Oracle

By James Rollins, 434pp, *William Morrow*, 140 yuan

A think tank of world scientists formed during the Cold War has discovered a way to manipulate and enhance the skills of autistic savant children – mathematical geniuses, statistical masterminds, brilliant conceptual artists. But strange side-effects develop. Before the effects can be analyzed, a rogue group of scientists begins its own secret experiments with the best children. They seek to create a prophet for the new millennium, one that can be manipulated to create a new era of global peace – at least as they define it.

(By He Jianwei)

Shop smart. stay fashionable during the recession



"A recessionista will insist on wearing brand-name goods, and will never consider low-quality knock offs, even if they're cheap."

— Li Yuanyi, 26, office lady

I am absolutely a brand lover. My leather boots, trendy jeans, sexy dresses, hot lipstick and eye shadow are all brand names. But this year I can't afford them all.

Even so, I can still buy some of my favorite brands by finding cheap dresses and accessories made by the same renowned designer.

Because of the recession, many brands have started to introduce new products at lower prices, but which retain that posh look.

H&M cooperated with Japanese designer Rei Kawakubo for a T-shirt priced only 99 yuan. Lane Crawford cooperated with many top world designers including British designer Alexander McQueen to launch its limited edition T-shirt for less than HK \$200 (176 yuan).

Marc Jacobs launched a colorful ring series at 60 yuan each, and is also selling a golden heart-shaped mirror for 70 yuan.

Though my budget is too tight to buy luxury dresses, it is worthwhile to invest money on one or two classic items that fit my style — things I know I can wear for more than one season.

A little black dress is one worthwhile investment. The black dress is always chic, and can take you from classic to sexy season after season.

Trying to figure out how to make the most of your shrinking budget and wardrobe this season? Here are some tips to look good for less:

1. Get creative with wardrobe basics. Build your wardrobe with an arsenal of classic pieces, then layer and mix them up so you almost never have the same outfit on. Many pop stars love creative combos like doubled-up cardigans, a blazer worn over a denim jacket, two plaids worn together and hard leathers mixed with soft knits.

2. Shop online first. It's great fun going to the mall for a shopping excursion. But, if you want to compare prices, see all of the sales and discounts and see everything offered by your favorite stores, it is best to shop online. Shop online first to determine where you want to go when you get to the mall.

3. When all else fails, focus on your hair. Pay extra attention to your hair and your shoes: If these look great, you can get away with almost anything.

Instead of spending a lot of money on a few pieces of clothing, I choose accessories for the season. It's amazing what difference accessories can make. The right combination can make classic look trendy.

Belts, big bags, statement necklaces and hats are some of the season's best bets.

Pay attention to fashion magazines' season's fabulous statement pieces. They give the simplest sweater and skirt a whole new personality.

A necklace — specifically something big and chunky but not expensive — can update a dress you've already worn. You can hit up some chain retailers for inexpensive scarves, earrings, bracelets and bits to mix and match with all of your closet basics. Colored or textured tights can also change the look of everything in your closet.

Wide or skinny, the belt can add another dimension to the waistline, or add a hat to that look and you're instantly in style.

4. Take stock of what you've already got. Before shopping, the first thing women should do is take time to reorganize their closets. They will likely find a gem they forget about because it's been buried. Also, make the pieces that you already own more versatile — a little black dress can be worn casually to work with tights and flat boots or to an evening event with pumps and a great statement necklace.

5. Stay away from the discount places, they aren't as good as they say they are price-wise and one can often find better bargains at other department stores.

6. Use seasonal sales to snag deals on year-round clothes. Buy spring/summer office wear in basic colors and you can wear it into fall/winter. A lightweight, summer-wool dress in basic grey or black can be layered with tights, high boots and a cozy, long cardigan in autumn.

7. A super-short shopping list. When making purchases, be mindful of what you spend and invest in one great piece.

"Secondhand and consignment shops are the recessionista's best friend."

— Candy Ma, 25, office lady



Recessionistas like me should be fans of secondhand shops and consignment stores where one can find high-end clothes at a fraction of the retail cost.

Whenever I want to look fabulous for a party but don't want to pay for an expensive brand-name dress or handbag, I go to a shop like V2 Cord 3, Guzhuo or Liumei, where I can always find brand-name goods.

There are some really fabulous deals on designer labels. A lot of the clothes in these shops are in perfect condition, so it's worth checking out if you haven't been to such a store before.

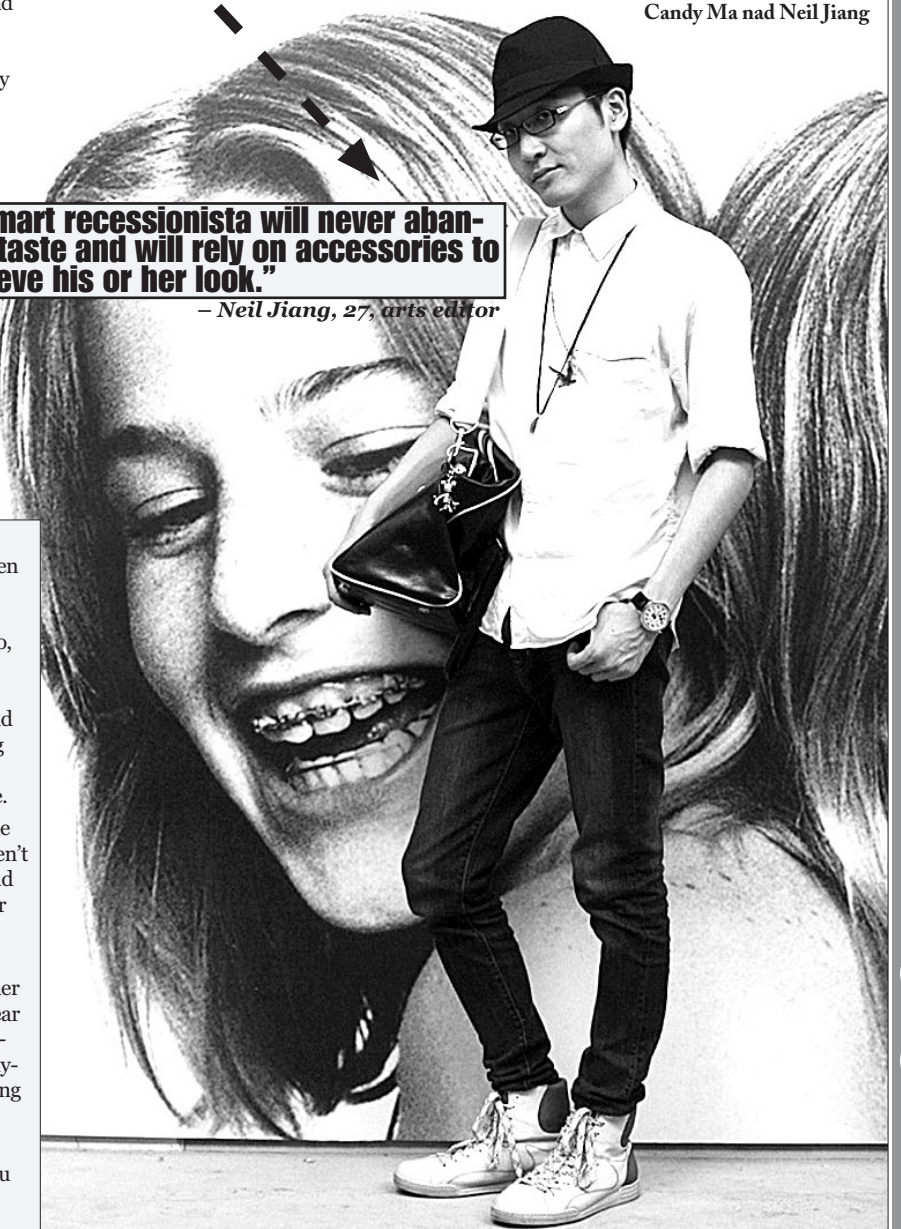
Sure, someone else wore it, but let's be realistic: someone probably tried on those fancy heels you bought. It's easy to forget that someone else wore your new jacket when you got it at a rock bottom price.

The other way is to shop online through sample sellers. Sample sale items are either overstocked goods or preview items for editors or fashion industry insiders. It's another place to find goods for less.

Photos provided by Li Yuanzi, Candy Ma and Neil Jiang

"A smart recessionista will never abandon taste and will rely on accessories to achieve his or her look."

— Neil Jiang, 27, arts editor



Ways to stay stylish on a recessionista budget

Zoom vroom with the wind

Shopping for a motorcycle

Aaron Horrell, an art director from the UK, got his new bike at 15,000 yuan from a local motor bike store.

Photos by Aaron Horrell



Fenghuolun Motor Corporation

The Shenzhen-based company opened a branch in town for motor vehicle fanatics that demand only the best. Here you will find many high-end motorcycles like Harley Davidson and Honda, which cost at least 300,000 yuan each. But most of Fenghuolun's bikes are around 150,000 yuan per unit, the kind that professional riders use. The cheapest ones cost some 5,000 yuan, ideal for those who are just looking for a simple mode of transport.

Second-hand Jing A license plates are available here, but still at a high price, and which varies depending on the bike the customer purchases. The cheapest plate is 9,000 yuan, and a plate's cost is incorporated into the motorcycle's price. Since the

By Zheng Lu

Now that spring has come, people are excited to again embrace the outdoors. To release energy that has been pent up all winter, why not see nature on a motorcycle? Feel the wind on your face, catch droplets of rain with your fingers and capture some admiring gazes along the way.

Jing A plates are second-hand, customers should make sure the plate's transfer procedures have been finalized before they pay for their bike. Fenghuolun also sells Jing B plates, which cost less but are not allowed within the Fourth Ring Road.

Where: Yard 1, Dongfeng Nan Lu, Nan Shiliju, Chaoyang District

Open: 9 am - 6 pm

Tel: 6222 3456

Jianshengxiang Motorcycle Corporation

A leading motorcycle store in the city, Jianshengxiang has been around for nearly 30 years and has many loyal customers because of its low prices. A bike with a Jing A license plate from this place generally costs 10,000 yuan. Many of its customers stop by during the evening rush hour to look around and avoid the traffic jam.

Where: 58 Jiadong Dajie, Dongcheng District

Open: 9 am - 7 pm

Tel: 6403 1823

Beijing Dajiating Motorcycle Store

This is another motorcycle center in the east side of town. Also available here are home-made motorbikes, bicycles and electric tricycles. As part of its service, the store can secure license plates for its customers. Because of its wide selection, people who are not sure what model to get should bring along an experienced rider who can advise them.

Where: 129 Xinhua Dajie, Tongzhou District

Open: 8:30 am - 5:30 pm

Tel: 6954 9128

Buying accessories and garments online



Helmet

According to local driving regulations, motorcycle operators and passengers need to wear a helmet. To find a safe yet tastefully designed helmet is not easy. The shop specializes in German "tanked" helmets that are popular among avid riders. Helmets go from less than 100 yuan to more than 400 yuan, but shipping is free.

Web site: shop35616406.taobao.com

Protective gear

Since motorcycling is a high-speed and high-risk activity, drivers should get the necessary protective gear and clothing. The shop below is the largest online motorcycle accessory store based in Beijing. Its products include protective upper clothing and knee protective gear, and cost from 60 to 400 yuan.

Web site: shop33054041.taobao.com



Motorcycle accessories are much cheaper online than in specialty shops. The key is to find a credible and affordable online shop. Shoppers may have to do a bit of assembly when the goods arrive, but the accompanying instructions are easy to follow. Below are some notable shops on Taobao.com:

Jacket

Bike riders often give onlookers the impression of being cool and mysterious. This owes a lot to their attire, especially the leather jacket. The site below is a biker equipment shop, which sells around 50 types of imported motorcycle jackets. Prices range from 250 to 900 yuan, depending on the jacket's design and material.

Web site: shop35336097.taobao.com

Local and expat bikers team up every Saturday to get away from the crowded city.

Motorcycle clubs

Onway Club

The club mainly enlists participants ahead of a motorcycle race. It is a loosely run organization that does not require a long-term membership. Onway generally organizes bikers to take part in either an amateur or a professional local race. Beforehand, the club will require the racer to submit details about his or her qualifications and type of motorcycle. No fees are charged apart from the race entry fee.

Web site: onway.cc (Chinese)

Tel: 6439 5747

Sunmoto Club

Bikers who love to travel with other bikers should check out this club. It usually organizes one activity each week. Sunmoto members have already gone on group trips to places like Tibet and Inner Mongolia. Only bike owners can join the outings, whose costs are split among participants. Meanwhile, owners can leave their bikes with the club on days that they need someone to keep an eye on it - and the service is free! To join an activity, interested parties need to post a message on the club's Web site or send an SMS. Members plans to travel to Xinjiang next month.

Web site: sunmoto.net/index1.htm (Chinese)

Tel: 6723 8664

Beijing Yanbao Motorcycle Club

This club holds a party for riders every last Wednesday of the month. There is no membership fee, but people need to pay up when they join activities. The group includes a number of foreign members. Its 2009 Knights Assembly at Taiping Lake Garden, Anhui Province will be held in May.

Web site: yanbao-bmw-motorrad.com (Chinese)

Tel: 8479 5211



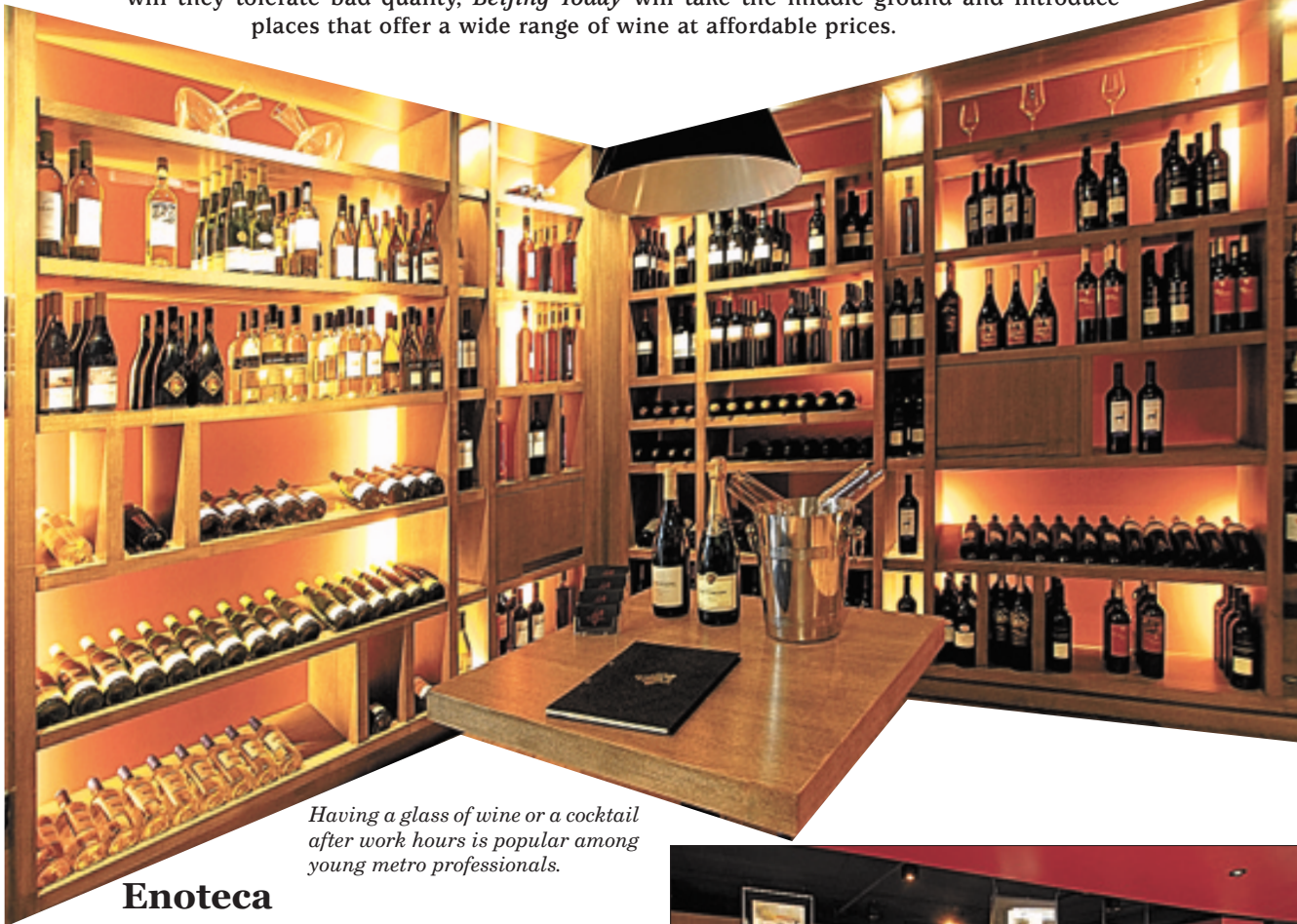
Wine to wind down

By Annie Wei

As the weather gets warmer, young people are getting back in the mood to meet up with friends and hang out over a bottle of wine.

Cidre Lu, a local wine writer, said he has observed two emerging kinds of wine consumers: the new rich and young white-collar workers. These groups have in turn resulted in the brisk sales of wine in two price categories: the most expensive and the cheap ones.

Since a majority of people will not spend an exorbitant amount of money for a drink, but neither will they tolerate bad quality, *Beijing Today* will take the middle ground and introduce places that offer a wide range of wine at affordable prices.



Having a glass of wine or a cocktail after work hours is popular among young metro professionals.

Enoteca

Enoteca made its name within Shanghai's wine-drinking circles. There are loads of positive comments about it on Dianpin.com, a leading online community that provides information about wining and dining in all major Chinese cities. "We've always called it the place with inexpensive wine," a Shanghai office worker said, explaining that some Chinese people have a hard time pronouncing the wine bar's name.

Enoteca's Beijing branch has over 100 types of wine, starting at 98 yuan a bottle. Its menu also has sandwiches, pasta and tapas. For people who are just starting to get acquainted with wine, this is a good place to go.

Mia Sun, a Taiwanese woman who works for an IT company, had a girls' night out with friends at the bar last Saturday. The six women chatted over two bottles of wine and a snack for three hours, and paid 42 yuan each at the end of the evening.

"It's worth the time and the money," Sun, who has gone to wine-tasting classes, said of Enoteca. She said both its Shanghai and Beijing branches had quality

selections, but that the venue in the southern city was cozier.

Since its opening last October, Enoteca Beijing has kept a low profile. Guy Duarte, who has lived in the country for 15 years and who manages the place, said they have placed ads only in the city's Korean and Japanese listings magazine, since they belong to very close-knit communities. He added that Beijing's food and beverage establishments usually grow by word-of-mouth.

Duarte considers Enoteca the only "real wine bar in Beijing," since they exclusively sell wine, which has inadvertently marginalized customers who do not drink it.

Enoteca can keep their prices low because their supplies come directly from vineyards through the company's import-export arm. In fact, two of Enoteca's owners regularly visit vineyards in various countries and regions to choose the products that will go into their wine bars.

Open: 10 am – 2 am

Where: The Place, 9a Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6587 1578

Cost: A glass of wine starts at 40 yuan



Enoteca opened its first bar in Shanghai.



Enoteca has over 100 types of wine.

Photos by Zhao Jingwei

La Baie Des Anges

French brothers Olivier Six and Benjamin Six opened the restaurant located in Houhai in September 2006. It is now a popular spot among Beijing expats who like French food and wine.

"The place caters to the varied tastes of *laowai* with its many different kinds of wine," Louis Mok, a French student said. "And it's a nice place to hang out with friends."

"Many of our customers are foreigners – French, American, Italian and South American," Olivier Six said. "There are more and more Chinese customers dropping in, accounting for about 20 percent of our clientele."

Aside from the assortment, wine at La Baie Des Anges is known for its reasonable price. A glass of the day's special only costs 25 yuan.

Customers who visit for the first time might have trouble finding it, but those looking for some peace and quiet will be rewarded. It stands next to Houhai's thumping restaurant and bar streets, but its *hutong* location shields it from the din.

The Sixes try to organize a variety of events every week. There are wine-tasting party, live music and theme parties are also held regularly.

Olivier Six said the restaurant is doing rather well, since the weather is warming up and good word about it is spreading around town. "The main difference in having a wine restaurant like this one is the working hours," he said. Customers in Beijing usually come after 9 pm, so they have no choice but to keep cooking until 1 am, and the day doesn't end until 3 am.

Where: 5 Nangongfeng Hutong, Houhai, Xicheng District

Open: Daily except Monday, 6 pm – 2 am

Tel: 6657 1605

Cost: A glass of wine starts at 25 yuan

Sequoia Cafe

Can we call Sequoia Cafe the city's media ghetto? As the only wireless cafe with decent coffee and light sandwiches in an area surrounded by embassies and diplomatic compounds, 90 percent of customers who come with laptops labor for the China bureau of Western media organizations.

Several years ago, the place began holding regular wine tasting events. It offers a variety of wines, but only sells per bottle.

Where: 44 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 7 am – 8 pm

Tel: 6501 5503

Cost: A bottle of wine starts at around 100 yuan



The Vineyard Cafe

A weekend brunch hot spot, the Vineyard Cafe also has a good wine selection. Its wines start at 150 yuan a bottle; champagnes go up to around 450 yuan.

Where: 31 Wudaoying Hutong, Dongcheng District

Open: Daily except Monday, 11:30 am to late

Tel: 6402 7961

Cost: At least 60 yuan per person for food and drinks

An emo reinvasion

By Wang Yu

From their classic piece "Until the day I Die" to their third album *The Black Swan*, released last year, Story of the Year has become one of the leading bands of emo music, a rock genre.

Initially named Big Blue Monkey, the group from St. Louis, Missouri, did not meet commercial success until it signed with Maverick Records in 2002, then released its first album *Page Avenue* in September 2003. That was also the year when the five musicians, together with other emo bands like The Used, Thursday and Silverstein, took the world by storm.

Though the punk rockers with their acoustic guitars retain the emo spirit that first brought them together, it was the fusion of hardcore punk and metal that gained them a huge following.



metal youth meets emo gave birth to Story of the Year.

Compared with similar bands such as My Chemical Romance, Story of the Year is different in that it continues to live in their debut album and powerful gigs. "You should never forget the band then only focused on their recordings," said Zhang Tianyu, drummer of the local band The Roy.

Jumping off from the amplifier with a back flip and swinging a guitar around one's body, these are just some of Story of the Year's antics that fans have watched over and over again on YouTube as a source of musical inspiration. "We've been injured many times on stage," the band members said, noting that some have even been hit by the guitar or bass of a teammate. "But it's

5 Friday, March 13

Exhibition Me. Mind

Thirteen artists from China, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand and Taiwan exhibit works in a variety of media and materials.

Where: Soka Art Center Beijing, B101-103 Sky & Sea Business Plaza, 107 Dongsu Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until April 5, daily except Monday, 10 am - 9 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 8401 2377

Quiescent Rhythm



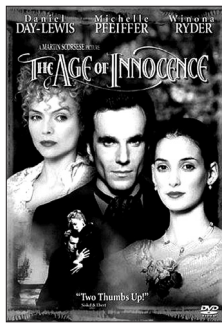
In her first solo exhibition, Sichuan artist Wen Xiaoya presents pieces that echo contemporary times and document historical events that took place within her lifetime and within her sphere of existence.

Where: Art Seasons Beijing, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until April 6, daily except Monday, 11 am - 7 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9850

Movie The Age of Innocence



Where: Blend Coffee, 1354 Building 13, Jianwai SOHO West Area, 39 Dongsanhuang Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5869 5030

Nightlife

Modern Sky, Wuhuaguo

Where: Star Live, 3/F, 79 Hepingli Xi Jie, Dongcheng District

When: 8:30 pm
Admission: 60 yuan
Tel: 6426 4436

Motianlou

Where: Jianghu, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiaodaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6401 4611

7 Sunday, March 15

Exhibition Hey! We're 80s - Young Artists Group Exhibition

Artists born in the 1980s create cartoons through a variety of materials, in which they talk about their future



even as they remind viewers of their past.

Where: Line Gallery, 3818 Warehouse, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until April 12, daily except Monday, 10 am - 6:30 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 8459 9685

Settle the Fire

Young artist Huang Liang, who hails from the northeast, presents works that reveal his feelings about life and diseases.

Where: Platform China

6 Saturday, March 14

Exhibition Gu Dexin

Gu's distinctive artwork features materials such as raw meat, cement and marble, which convey a sense of thrill with life and society.

Where: Beijing Center for the Arts, Legation Quarter, 23 Qianmen Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until April 3, 10 am - 10 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6559 8008

Look Deeper



The gallery's first exhibition for this year presents a group of 12 young artists who attempt to explore the depths of their subjects and themselves, in good times or bad.

Where: Platform China Contemporary Art Insti-

tute, East End Art Zone A, 319-1 Caocangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: Until May 17, daily except Monday, 11 am - 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 0091

Movie

Youth

Where: Caihuoche, 102 Building 406, 4th area of Wangjing, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6470 2917

Nightlife

P.K.14, Snapline

Where: D-22, 242 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 10 pm
Admission: 50 yuan
Tel: 6265 3177

Present of White Valentines' Day

Where: Lao What Bar, 72 Beichang Jie (West Gate of the Forbidden City), Xicheng District

When: 8:30 pm
Admission: 30 yuan, 50 yuan
Tel: 13682075147

Upcoming

Nightlife

RandomK(e)

The Beijing-based expat band's debut album, *Waiting*, hits the streets with a visual and aural experience of a release party featuring guest musicians SUBS and Sulumi.

Where: MAO Live House, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: March 21, 9 pm
Admission: 80 yuan
Tel: 6402 5080

all worth it in the end," lead vocalist Dan Marsala said.

The domestic music scene experienced an emo invasion years ago, with most of the similar-type bands learning from Story of the Year. Next Saturday, the students meet their teachers face-to-face.

Where: The Star Live, 3/F, 79 Hepingli Xi Jie, Dongcheng District

When: March 22, 8 pm
Admission: 260 yuan before March 22, 300 yuan on March 22, VIP 660
Tel: 6425 5677

Stage in April

Concert

China Philharmonic Orchestra 2008-2009 Music Festival

Who: Conducted by Paul Meyer
Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District
When: April 5, 7:30 pm
Admission: 50-680 yuan
Tel: 6501 1854

Xue Wei Violin Recital

Where: National Grand Theater Concert Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: April 17, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-500 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Taking the Road Beijing Concert 2009

Who: Jonathan Lee, Wakin Chou, A Yue and Lo Tayu
Where: Beijing Workers Gymnasium, Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: April 18, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-1,680 yuan
Tel: 6417 7845

Chanson Concert

Who: William Sheller
Where: Zhongshan Music Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), Dongcheng District
When: April 19, 7:30 pm
Admission: 30-380 yuan
Tel: 6559 8306

Bertrand Chamayou Piano Recital

Where: Beijing University Centennial Memorial Hall, 116 Zhongguancun Bei Dajie, Haidian District
When: April 25, 7 pm
Admission: 80-150 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

Mantovani Orchestra China Tour - Beijing Concert

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District
When: April 28-29, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6501 1854

Dance

Juliette Binoche and Akram Khan

Where: Mei Lanfang Grand Theater, 48 Hepingli Dajie, Xicheng District
When: April 3-5, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,280 yuan
Tel: 5833 1218

Oliver Twist

Who: British TNT Theater
Where: Beijing University Centennial Memorial Hall, 116 Zhongguancun Bei Dajie, Haidian District
When: April 17-19, 7 pm
Admission: 80-200 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

Opera

Tosca

Who: Directed by Lang Kun
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: April 15-18, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-880 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By Jackie Zhang)

Breaking out of the lonely trap

By Venus Lee

Life is meaningless. Earth sucks. There is no reason to get out bed in the morning. These may sound like symptoms of a bad day, but when you actually feel this way, it may be a sign of loneliness.

It may seem strange that one could feel lonely in a city of more than 18 million people, but that is precisely how the condition is defined: an excruciating emptiness accompanied by a difficulty in reaching out to the people around you.

"Loneliness is pervasive in our society, but it receives little professional attention," Fang Xin, director of the Psychological Center of Peiking University, said.

Experts warn that chronic loneliness will deteriorate one's health.

Side effects of loneliness

"Being lonely is as bad for your health as smoking or obesity," John Cacioppo, a psychologist from the University of Chicago, said at the American Association for the Advancement of Science's annual conference last month.

The Chicago University researcher compared the health of people who shut themselves away from the world with outgoing types and found the difference in health between the lonely and socially active people could be as great as that between smokers and non-smokers and between obese and physically fit people.

His research showed that loneliness can raise blood pressure and cortisol levels. It can also make it harder to sleep and accelerate the onset of Alzheimer's

disease or dementia.

In his study, the loneliest people had blood pressure readings 30 points higher than those with the active social lives, making them three times as likely to develop heart disease and stroke and twice as likely to die from these complications as people with normal blood pressure. High levels of the hormone cortisol can suppress the immune system, raising a person's vulnerability to disease.

Lonely people sleep fitfully and are likely to rely on sleeping pills and feel tired throughout the day. They reported more daytime dysfunction. Since sleep tends to deteriorate with age, the added hit of loneliness probably jeopardizes this natural restoration process even more, Cacioppo said.

Root of melancholy

Loneliness is a feeling associated with a profound surge of emptiness. It is more than wanting company. Someone who is lonely may find it hard to form human relationships. Professor Cacioppo said the phenomenon is relevant in today's fragmented society. "We are increasingly living in isolation. Partly because we are ageing, marrying later, having fewer children, ... but also we communicate through the Internet rather than face-to-face. So levels of loneliness are going up," he said.

Actually, people can experience loneliness for many reasons, and many life events are associated with it. "The lack of friendship during childhood and adolescence and the physical absence of meaningful people can cause depression and involuntary celibacy," Professor Fang said.

Fang said many people experience loneliness for the first time

as an infant. It is a common, but normally temporary, consequence of divorce or the breakup or loss of a long-term relationship. In such cases, it may stem both from the loss of a specific person and from the withdrawal from social circles caused by associated sadness.

Loss of a significant person in one's life causes a grief response; here, one can feel lonely even in the company of others. Loneliness may also occur after the birth of a child, after marriage or any socially disruptive event, such as moving away from one's hometown. It can occur within marriages or similar close relationships when there is anger, resentment or when love cannot be given or received.

Loneliness is not the same as solitude. Some people are fine with being alone, and some see solitude as an important path to spiritual growth. But for many, social isolation and physical ageing make a toxic cocktail.

Overcoming your loneliness

Loneliness carries deep, emotional pain. If you frequently succumb to its pangs, the first step is to identify why you feel lonely then work to overcome it.

"There is no magic pill to remove the pain of being alone. Don't try to self-medicate with alcohol or ignore it by drowning yourself in work," Fang said, "You have to snap yourself out of it. Why suffer loneliness when you can do something about it?"

1. Face up to it

Admit you are lonely. Covering it up, disguising it or denying that it is affecting you will only aggravate the situation. It is okay to admit that loneliness has become a problem, but you must resolve to overcome it.

2. Get involved with people

There's nothing more healing to a lonely person than to experience the love and support of other people. Everyone needs to feel like he has

a place – that he or she is important to someone else. Getting involved with other people and providing them with emotional nutrition is one way to heal yourself. When you isolate and disconnect from the world, you feel empty. Life is void without meaningful contact with others. Remember, the quality of friends is what counts – not the quantity. It's better to have a handful of good friends than a hundred acquaintances.

3. Become more active

Stop being passive. If you miss someone, like your parents, family or friends, then visit or call them. Talking to an understanding friend can help change your mood. If you do not have an understanding friend, try talking with a pastor, teacher or counselor. If you are lonely because you miss someone who died, express your grief and remember your happier moments with them. Memories will always be with you, so you can let go of the negative feelings of loss.

4. Find a new hobby

Loneliness can be exacerbated by boredom. Use this opportunity to find a new hobby or activity to keep you occupied so you do not have time to dwell on your unhappiness. If your hobby involves outdoor activities, you might meet new friends in the process.

5. Adjust your lifestyle

It is possible that you are dispirited because of your lifestyle. Reexamine your daily routine. Change things up if the routine is causing boredom and loneliness. Sitting alone in one corner of your study room doing nothing may seem harmless. You may be looking for peace and quiet. The trouble is if your mind wanders to gloomy thoughts. Try playing soft music that will not interrupt the calm, but can help prevent the onset of a bad mood. Let in the sun: open the drapes. A well-illuminated room is less gloomy than a dark closet.

CFP Photo

The treasures of Gubeikou

A two-day walk down history lane

By Zhang Dongya

Gubeikou, in Miyun County, is known as the "first village north of Beijing." With a variety of attractions including a section of the Great Wall built in the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-577) and old temples and courtyards, it is ideal for a two-day weekend tour. People who dismiss it as "simply a village" will miss a cluster of historical sites with a rich folk tradition.



Panlongshan Great Wall: old and original

Unlike the famous Badaling Great Wall, other sections of the Wall have retained their original appearance without the aid of restoration and repair work and are not swarming with crowds of tourists. The Panlongshan Great Wall in Gubeikou is such a place.

Since Gubeikou is the northern gateway of the capital, the Great Wall at Panlongshan was the site of numerous wars. It has two sections: one built during the Northern Qi Dynasty and another rebuilt in early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The Qi wall is Beijing's oldest.

It has watchtowers, strategic passes and other military constructions scattered along its stretch. Of its more than 40 watchtowers, the General Tower is most famous. With 22 *men-dong*, or arched entrances, it was the command station for battles along the wall. Opposite stands the 24-hole Tower, which has six arrow-windows facing the north, south, east and west.

Panlongshan, the only unre-stored section of the Wall open to the public, has preserved its Ming-Dynasty look throughout centu-

ries: The entire wall is made of earth, stone and brick. Visitors will feel like they are taking a walk through history, especially when they see an ancient brick marked, "Built by XX in the Reign of Wanli."

The 24-hole Tower has an area in which visitors are barred by the military from entering. People can choose to turn around, or follow a small descending path.



Road to prosperity

Guyudao, or the Ancient Imperial Road, was built in 1680 during the Reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty. The 1.5-kilometer commercial street was originally lined with 160 shops.

In 2006, it was restored in a project which cost 1 million yuan: the restoration followed to its original design. The present road, paved with granite, is about half the original length. Some *siheyuan*, or courtyard homes, were built along the road to preserve its historical flavor.



Yanglinggong Temple

Continued on page 21...

A section of the Panlongshan Great Wall built in the Northern Qi Dynasty is Beijing's oldest.

... continued from page 20



Yaowang Temple was built to commemorate the “King Medicine” Sun Simiao.



Three statues of General Yang Linggong in different sizes are in the Yanglinggong Temple.



The temple for the Yang family. Photos by Shan Yuying

Tips

1. Transportation
Gubeikou is a long way from downtown Beijing, and there is no public transportation within the village, so the best choice is to drive. Go along the Beijing-Chengde expressway until you reach Miyun County, then drive for another 58 kilometers along National Highway 101. Alternately, visitors can take Bus 980 or 970 at the Dongzhimen Long-distance Bus Terminal to Miyun, then transfer to another bus that goes to Gubeikou Village. Another option is to take a bus to Chengde, which goes through Gubeikou Village.

2. Accommodations
In the village, there are about 80 families offering

board and lodging for tourists. The buildings, which were designed to look like siheyuan, are clustered along Guyudao, the Ancient Imperial Road. The average cost of a room is 60 yuan per day for one person, which covers lodging and three meals. Rooms with private toilets are 80 yuan.

3. Snacks The village is mainly populated by people from the Han, Hui and Man groups. The Mans have developed special snacks like Ludagun, glutinous rice rolls with sweet bean flour, and Zao-wow, steamed rice cakes with date stuffing.

4. Admissions New admission fees to the Great Wall and the temples have

not yet been decided, but are expected to come out next week. The current prices are as follows: Panlongshan Great Wall 20 yuan; Yanglinggong Temple and Yaowang Temple 15 yuan; a package for the three is 40 yuan.

5. Temperature A night view of the village, in pitch darkness illuminated only by the moon, attracts many urbanites. The temperature there is 3 to 5°C lower than downtown Beijing, so visitors should take warmer clothing, especially at night. With Gubeikou's many attractions, a two-day tour is suggested - one day for the Great Wall and the other for the temples and other sights.

Temples to ancient masters

Gubeikou also contains various ancient temples. There used to be more than 30 temples, but only 15 remained as of the Republic of China (1912-1949). Now, only three are open to the public: Yaowang, Caishen and Yanglinggong temples. The rest, which were little more than relics, were demolished during ensuing wars and the Cultural Revolution.

In the village is a small courtyard with three temples, called “Three Temples within Two Strides.” Two of the temples were torn down during the Cultural Revolution, and only the Yaowang Temple is left.

Yaowang, or the Medicine-King, Temple was built to memorialize the renowned Tang Dynasty pharmacist Sun Simiao, who earned the reputation “King of Medicine.” There are scores of other Yaowang temples throughout the country built in his honor.

The one in Gubeikou was built in early Ming Dynasty. It was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in 2002. Many visitors come to burn incense and pray to Sun for health and safety.

But the village's biggest and most famous temple is the Yanglinggong. Originally named Yang Jiye, Yang Linggong was a famous

general during the war between the Northern Song and Liao dynasties. He was called “invincible,” because under his direction, the Northern Song always won the war.

Ironically, Yang never set foot on Gubeikou, and the temple was constructed by his enemies. After the Northern Song made peace with the Liao, Liao governors built the temple and named it after Yang, both to please the Northern Song people and to serve as an inspiration to Liao soldiers.

Yang was born in Shanxi Province, and spent most of his life fighting there, so a bigger temple in his honor was erected in his hometown.

The temple in Gubeikou has two halls: one is a shrine to Yang and his eight sons, while the other behind it commemorates brave female soldiers surnamed Yang.

The temple has three statues of Yang in different sizes: The biggest is on permanent display; the mid-sized one is brought out on his birthday; and the smallest is for people who want to bring it home to worship. Every September 13 on the lunar calendar, Yang's birthday, a temple fair is held, which attracts hordes of people from the village and its neighbors localities.

A monument to the warrior spirit

Succeeding generations always connect General Yang Linggong's tale to the “seven soldier sages.” Like Yang's temple, the soldiers' monument was constructed by their enemies, the Japanese troops.

In 1933, when Japanese forces invaded the country, the Chinese army at Gubeikou fought hard to resist the enemy. There, seven soldiers guarded a hill, blocking the Japanese troops' advance. After hours of fighting, in which more than 200 Japanese soldiers were injured or killed, the invaders still could not

claim victory. They estimated that hundreds of Chinese soldiers fought on the hill, but only found seven corpses after the battle.

The Japanese troops were astonished, so after they buried the bodies, they erected a wooden tablet with the inscription, “Tomb of the Seven Warriors of China.”

In 1993, the monument for the seven soldiers was rebuilt. A marker was also added to commemorate all the soldiers who died in the Gubeikou War 60 years before.

Powerful Presentations

Make your meetings shine!



By Andy Clark

You've been there. Stuck in a dull presentation, thinking through better ways in which you could be spending your time. You glance at your watch and exhale deeply as you realize that there are 30 minutes left. The presenter drones on relentlessly, barely moving, except to click on to the next hopelessly complicated PowerPoint slide. His monotone is almost hypnotic and transports you away as an hour of your life slowly ticks by.

So how about your own presentations? Do you keep your listeners attention, giving them the information in an entertaining and stimulating way? Do people leave inspired and with more energy than when they started?

Over the past eight years in China I've attended 2,000 presentations from Swiss CFOs to local middle school children. It is from these presentations that I learned the following rules of presenting:

1. Know Your Audience

This is the best known tip on presentations ever, and the least implemented. From NLP (Neuro Linguistic Program-

ming) I learned an incredibly powerful technique called "Perceptual Positions." It involves seeing, hearing and feeling the world through someone else's perception - in this case, through the eyes and ears of your listeners. When your presentation is arranged, take a few minutes to sit back and relax. Imagine you are in your own audience. If you are presenting to a team of engineers, imagine that is who you are. Sit like an engineer, think like an engineer, breathe like an engineer. "What would make me say 'Wow, that presentation was great!'" Write down any ideas that come to mind and include these in your preparation.

2. Think Big!

Most people are nervous when they speak in front of a group: it's the US's number one fear, even above the fear of heights and of creepy crawlies. So what happens when we stand up? Many of us stand with our shoulders slumped, feet together and heads down: the classic "nervous presenters" position. A nervous presentation in a quiet tone will go unheard and impress none.

Another tip is to "Act as if



CFP Photo

..." with anything that requires you to stretch yourself. When making an important speech, act as though you are a great presenter. Put yourself in the shoes of Tony Robbins, John F Kennedy or US President Barack Obama. Approach your audience with head held high, shoulders up and make eye contact with those in the room. Breathe deeply and have the presence of someone that runs the company, of the owner of the building or the

president of a county.

3. End strong

All too often in China I see presentations that are reasonably well put together. They have decent body language but fail miserably at the end. It's all too common to have the presenter finish with a quiet "That's it ...". Then there is an awkward silence as the presenter shuffles off stage amid a couple of quiet claps from an unimpressed audience.

End your presentation with a strong statement that sums up

your main point. For example "So, those are the key methods that I use to write professional emails. It's been wonderful to have the opportunity to talk with you today. Thank you very much!" This final sentence should be clear and confident to allow the audience to give you a big round of applause in appreciation.

Andy Clark is the co-founder of ClarkMorgan and was awarded "Most Outstanding New Trainer" at the Hong Kong Management Awards in 2008.

Dining

Canarino Lunch



Indulge in the new Canarino lunch with your choice of four different pastas from 15 shapes and 15 sauces. Lunch is accompanied by an appetizer and dessert and Italy's favorite Italian winter mix of fresh lemon infused-tea, the famous Canarino.

Where: Danieli's, St. Regis Hotel Beijing, 21 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: 11:30 am - 2 pm (Monday - Friday)

Cost: 85 yuan net

Tel: 6460 6688 ext. 2440

Treasures of the Sea

This March, Chinese Master Chef Chung Fai Man expands his culinary mastery with Treasures of the Sea, nutritious double boiled fish gas bladders and sea cucumber soup, as well as contemporary Cantonese dishes. Boost your health and beauty and pamper your taste buds.



Where: YaoChi Cantonese Restaurant, Grand Millennium Beijing, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 11 am - 2:30 pm

(lunch), 5:30-10 pm (dinner), March 1-31

Tel: 6530 9383

Venison Dishes

This French Bistro will present an array of venison dishes. Try the house specialty, Grilled Venison Fillet, delicately prepared by Chef Robert Gynne and enjoy its deep and full flavor.

Where: The French Bistro, The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District



When: March 1-31, daily except Sunday, 6-10:30 pm

Tel: 6590 5566 ext. 2119

Imperial delights

This March, Executive Chef Chau has a menu that combines the most precious ingredients: Bird's Nests, Shark's Fins and Abalone. Experience these delights in a set menu of appetizers, main courses, rice and noodle dishes.

Where: Shangri-La Hotel Beijing, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu, Haidian District

When: until March 31

Cost: 1,288 yuan (subject to 15 percent service charge)

Tel: 6841 2211

Exotic cuisine from Sri Lanka

Take the plunge into the surprising and spice-infused cuisine of beautiful Sri Lanka. The various dishes are created by guest chef Publis Singho and his team. Enjoy the Scene's lunch or dinner

buffet and enter the lucky draw for a chance to see Sri Lanka. The winner will receive a four-night complimentary stay at a five-star hotel in Sri Lanka or two nights for two persons at the historic Mount Lavinia Hotel in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Accommodations include breakfast.

Where: China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 35



Hotel

Romantic Getaway Package

Kowloon Shangri-La Hong Kong offers a Romantic Getaway Package. The package includes accommodations at the Deluxe Harbour View room, welcome tea and a fruit plate, in-room breakfast or buffet breakfast at Cafe Kool for two, a bottle of champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries.

Where: Kowloon Shangri-La Hong Kong, 64 Mody Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East Kowloon, Hong Kong

When: Until December 31

Cost: from HK \$3,048 (2,688 yuan) per

night (subject to a 10 percent service charge)

Tel: 852 2721 2111

New GM of Mercure Wanshang Beijing

Mary Goh has been appointed by Accor as the new general manager of Mercure Wanshang Beijing. Goh, a Singaporean who has worked in China for 18 years, has a strong sales background and aims to lead the hotel to new heights.

Where: Mercure Wanshang Beijing, 1 Yinhe Dajie, Shijingshan District
Tel: 6868 1199

Aviation

Win a round trip ticket to Europe with Lufthansa

Lufthansa Airlines has launched an essay competition calling on Chinese students to share their European study and travel experiences. Registered members can vote on the best essay and add useful notes. The 10 most popular essays with tips will be rewarded. The participant with

the most votes will receive a Lufthansa Economy Class return ticket from China to Europe. The other nine runners-up will receive 10,000 Miles and More miles each, which can be redeemed for merchandise items and more at 100 Lufthansa partners. One iPod Nano will be awarded to voters in a weekly raffle.

Web: lufthansa.xiaonei.com

When: Until March 29

(By Sun Feng)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Feet can think, but toes cannot



CFP Photo

By He Jianwei

Last month, my American college teacher Allen Jennings, who currently works in Taiwan, moved back to the mainland and hosted a party at his house. Most of my classmates attended the gathering, in which we played a game popular in Taiwan.

It was a guessing game. Participants were split into groups of two; one explained the meaning of an English word or phrase, while the other guessed it. The pair who got the most correct answers within three minutes won. We made some small changes in the rules, since the original game was played in Chinese.

The person who did the explaining could only speak in English; he or she could not utter a word contained in the phrase or make any gestures.

The professor and one classmate wrote

down several words and phrases. The rest of us paired up.

Soon after the game started, the phrase "think on your feet" touched off a heated debate. Wu Qing explained the phrase, and Li Jun had to guess what it was.

"How many words?" Li said.

"Four words. We use our brain to do what?" Wu said.

"Think."

"That's right. The first word is 'think.' We usually say the phrase in such a situation. For example, you think a problem is hard to solve, but I think it's a cup of tea. So I will tell you to use which part of your body to think? We often say it in Chinese to express that something is a no-brainer."

"Think on your toes?"

"The first three words are correct. We usually say we go to work by bus, by bicy-

cle and on ..."

"Foot?"

"Yes. One is foot and two are ..."

"Feet."

"So the four words are ..."

"Think on your feet," Li said.

"Bingo!" Wu yelled.

Although they got the correct answer, the professor thought Wu misled Li. "What do you by mean 'think on your toes'?" Jennings said.

"We usually say 'Think on your toes, please. This is easy to handle,'" Wu explained.

"OK. But the phrase 'think on your feet' doesn't mean the same as the Chinese phrase. We use it to express quick thinking and reaction, especially in a situation where things are happening very fast."

"Really? I thought they meant the same thing. Oh well, we won anyway," Wu winked at Li.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

Local professor: Zhu Shida

1. Decrease the emotional health

How can you decrease emotional health? It is obvious that the verb was wrongly chosen; the writer was thinking in Chinese. The person actually wishes to say, "the mental health has deteriorated."

2. He came in 1994, where he encountered her.

The problem with this sentence lies in the usage of "where." What does it modify? If it is supposed to modify "1994," then it should be, "He came in 1994, when he encountered her." From the context, it appears that the writer wishes it to modify a place. If so, this is not a well-arranged sentence. It should instead be, "In 1994, he came to Beijing where he encountered her." You cannot use "where" to modify time.

3. Travel expenses and visa application are two things with which to deal.

This involves the use of an infinitive phrase used as an attributive, and sounds very awkward. It is simply not idiomatic to say "with which to deal." Normally, you would say, "Travel expenses and visa application are two things to deal with" just as you would say, "You have two kids to take care of." You would not say, "You have two kids of whom to take care."

Native speaker: Penny Turner

1. Decrease the emotional health

This phrase is reminiscent of a "blacklist" item we had a few weeks ago: "Measures to stem employment." Healthy human beings aim to "improve" their emotional health and those of people around them, not cause it to deteriorate; just like governments and enterprises are looking for measures to "stimulate" employment, not "stem" or "restrict" it. Like Professor Zhu said, the writer probably wishes to describe a state of decreased emotional health, in which case you can also say that "emotional health has declined."

2. He came in 1994, where he encountered her.

I agree with the professor's explanation. And just a reminder, whenever you write, double-check that the word you wish to modify and the modifier you use coincide. Aside from "when" and "where," you have "who" for people and "that" for inanimate objects, places or events.

3. Travel expenses and visa application are two things with which to deal.

We usually avoid ending a sentence with a preposition, such as the word "with," thus the writer obviously tried to look for a way out of that. But there are exceptions to every rule, especially when sentences would otherwise end up sounding awkward, stiff or ridiculous. So I will go with the professor's suggestion and stick with something easier to "deal with."

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Please fasten balcony door fastening

By Tiffany Tan

We thank our reader, Lisa Carducci, for sending the photos.

Fasten your seat belt. Fasten your gaze on that man. But it is better to latch or lock the door. And only say it once, because we heard you the first time. ("Latch the door latch" or "lock the door lock" is definitely out.)

The Chinese words say "Please lock the balcony's glass door." This looks like a sign you'd find in a restaurant, bar or cafe, where patrons would visit the balcony for a smoke, for some peace and quiet or for some fresh air. So what the owner likely means is to "Please keep the balcony doors shut" — mainly to keep the cool air in, the cold air out or the flies far away.



Photo by Lisa Carducci

The Reader (2008)

Movie of the week

The movie is adapted from a novel written by German law professor and judge Bernhard Schlink. It has less suspense than other movies adapted from similar novels, but Kate Winslet's acting saves the script and makes the movie a complex tale of human nature. But many scenes are shadows of how they appeared in the original text. The momentum of the affair does not segue seamlessly into a courtroom drama as it does in Schlink's book.

The brilliant Ralph Fiennes shines alongside Winslet with his sensitive acting. The sexually charged and heartbreaking movie aims to teach that actions have consequences, and rarely are they easy to endure.

Synopsis

The movie opens in post-World War II Germany, where ailing teenager Michael Berg (David Kross and Ralph Fiennes) has fallen ill and is aided by Hanna Schmitz (Kate Winslet). Upon being reunited, Michael discovers Hanna loves being read to and the pair begins a passionate and clandestine love affair. Hanna later vanishes without a trace, leaving Michael heartbroken and despondent.

Nearly a decade later, when Michael has become a law student and observing the Nazi war crime trials, she re-enters his life. Hanna wanders into the courtroom and takes a seat in the defendant's chair. During the trial, her past comes into focus just as Michael uncovers a secret that will have a profound impact on both of their lives.



Scene 1

(Lying on the bed of Hanna's apartment, Michael reads for his secret lover first time.)

Hanna (H): You never told me what you've been studying.

Michael (M): Studying?

H: At school. Do you learn languages?

M: Yes.

H: What languages?

M: Latin.

H: Say something in Latin.

M: Quo, quo scelesti ruitis? Aut cur dexteris aptantur enses conditi? Aut cur dexteris aptantur enses conditi? It's Horace.

H: It's wonderful.

M: Do you want some Greek? Oi men ippeon stroton oi de pesedon oi da naon phais epi gan malainan emmenai kalliston, ego de ken otto tis eratai.

H: It's beautiful.

M: How can you tell? How do you know when you've no idea what it means?

H: What are you studying in German?

M: I'm studying a play. Well, I'm writing a play. By a writer called Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. You've heard of him? The play is called Emilia Galotti. You can read it.

H: I'd rather listen to you.

M: All right. Act One. Scene One. The setting: one of the prince's chambers. The Prince ... I'm not very good.

H: Go on!

M: "Complaints, nothing but complaints. For goodness' sake, is there anything, live for work? Just imagine that people actually envy us?"

Scene 2

(Years after Hanna vanishes, Michael becomes a law student and observes her trial with his professor.)

Professor (P): Societies think they operate by something called morality but they don't. They operate by something

called law. You're not guilty of anything merely by (1) working at Auschwitz. Eight thousand people worked at Auschwitz. Precisely (2) 19 have been convicted, and only six for murder. To prove murder you have to prove intent. That's the law. The question is never was it wrong but was it legal? And not by our laws. No. By the laws of the time.

Student (S): But isn't that ...

P: What?

S: Narrow?

P: Oh, Yes. The law is narrow. On the other hand, I suspect people who kill other people tend to be aware that it's wrong.

Scene 3

(To conceal the fact she is illiterate, Hanna pleads guilty to letting prisoners burn to death while she served as a guard during the war.)

Judge (J): Two of the victims are in this court. They deserve an answer. Here, this is the SS (3) report. You all have copies. This is the report which was written, approved and signed by all of you immediately after the event. In the written report, you all claim you didn't even know about the fire until after it happened. But that isn't true, is it? Well? It's not true.

H: I don't know what you're asking.

J: The first thing I'm asking is why didn't you unlock the doors?

H: Obviously. For the obvious reason. We couldn't.

J: Why couldn't you?

H: We were guards. Our job was to guard the prisoners. We couldn't just let them escape.

J: I see. And if they escaped, then you'd be blamed, you'd be charged, you might even be executed?

H: No. If we opened the doors, then there would have been chaos. How could we

have restored order? It happened so fast. It was snowing. The bombs ... There were flames all over the village. Then the screaming began. It got worse and worse. And if they were all to come rushing out, we couldn't just let them escape. We were responsible for them.

J: So you did know what was happening? You did know? You made a choice. You let them die rather than risk letting (4) them escape. The other defendants have made an allegation against you. Have you heard this allegation? They say you were in charge.

H: It isn't true. I was just one of the guards.

J: Did you write the report?

H: No. No. We all discussed what to say. We all wrote it together.

Other defendants (O): She wrote it! She wrote the report!

J: Is that true?

H: Does it matter who did?

O: She wrote it!

J: I need to see a sample of your handwriting.

H: My handwriting?

J: Yes. I need to establish (5) who wrote the report.

Counsel (C): I'm sorry, but I really don't see how that's appropriate. Nearly 20 years have gone by.

J: Take her this piece of paper. Counsel, approach the bench (6).

C: Are you really going to compare handwriting of 20 years ago with handwriting of today?

H: There is no need. I wrote the report ...

Scene 4

(Depressed, Michael talks about his story with the professor after the trial.)

M: I have a piece of information concerning one of the defendants. Something they were not admitting.

P: What information? You don't need me to tell you. It's perfectly clear you have a moral obligation to disclose it to the court.

M: It happens this information is favorable to the defendant. It can help her case. It may even affect the outcome, certainly the sentencing.

P: So?

M: There's a problem. The defendant herself is determined to (7) keep this information secret.

P: What are her reasons?

M: Because she's ashamed.

P: Ashamed of what? Have you spoken to her?

M: Of course not.

P: Why "of course not"?

M: I can't. I can't do that. I can't talk to her.

P: What we feel isn't important. It's utterly unimportant. The only question is what we do. If people like you don't learn from what happened to people like me, then what the hell is the point of anything?

Vocabulary

1. **merely by:** only by

2. **precisely:** in a precise manner, here it also used to intensify meaning

3. **SS:** Schutzstaffel, an elite quasi-military unit of the Nazi party that served as Hitler's personal guard and as a special security force in Germany and the occupied countries

4. **risk doing:** doing something under risk

5. **establish:** here it means to make sure

6. **approach the bench:** sit down on the bench

7. **determined to:** dedicated to doing something

(By Wang Yu)